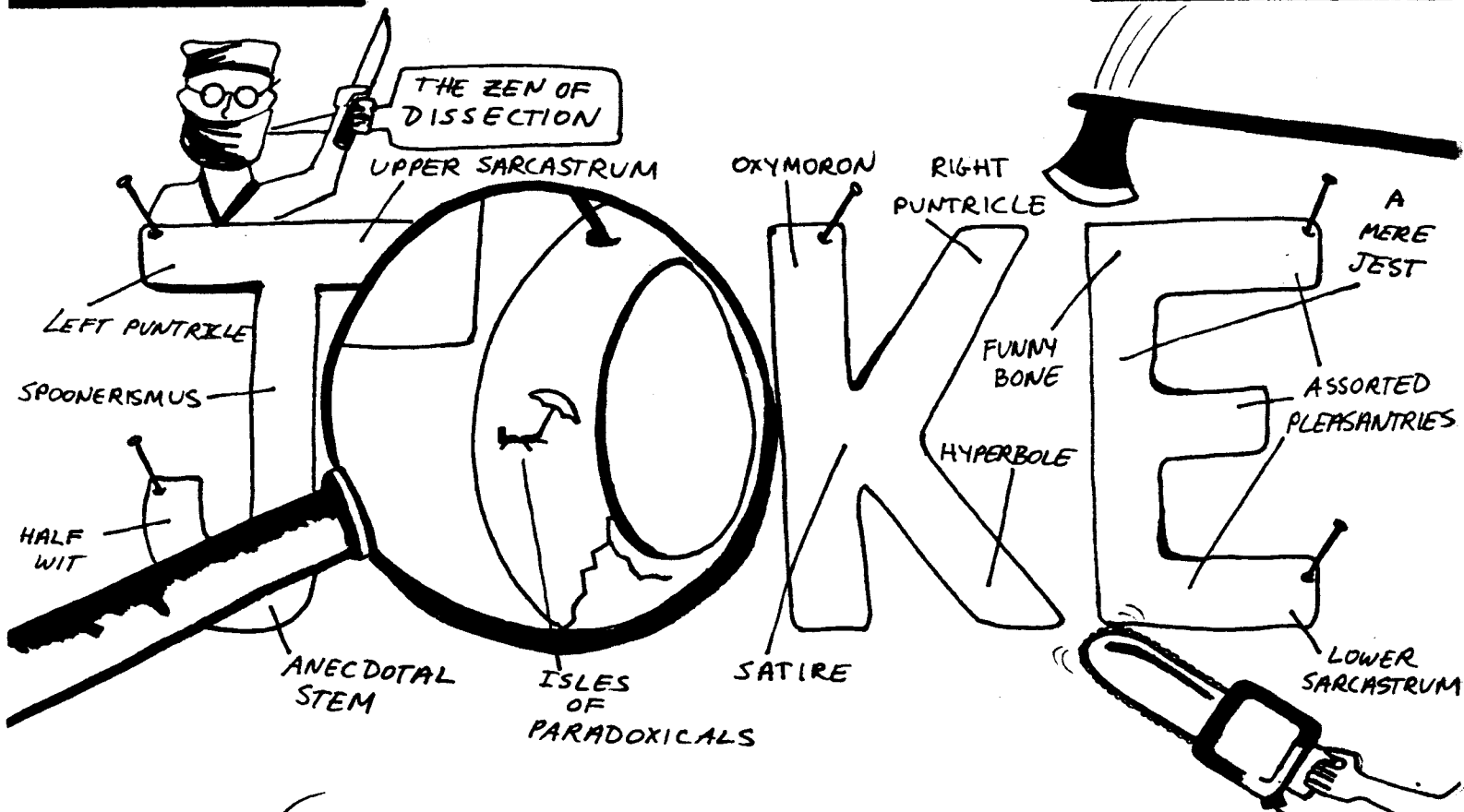


price: \$1.50 issue #74

# INSIDE



A Newsletter of Comedy and Creativity

UGH! IT REEKS OF  
FORMALDEHYDE...

DON'T KNOCK IT 'TILL YOU'VE TRIED IT!

START 'ER  
UP, SVEN!

Try our new Lobotomy By Mail!

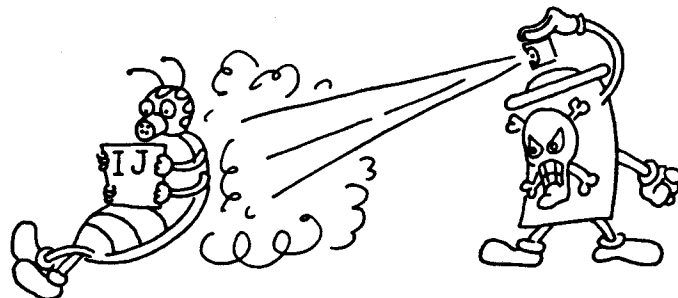
D. Krause 12/24/89



# Upcoming Events

MARCH 31 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #75  
 APRIL is National Humor Month  
 APRIL 1 - Daylight Savings Time begins; Lon Chaney Sr. (b. 1883); All Fool's Day (IJ HIGH HOLYDAY)  
 APRIL 2 - International Children's Book Day; Casanova (b. 1725); Max Ernst (b. 1891); H.C. Anderson (b. 1805)  
 APRIL 3 - Sally Rand (b. 1904)  
 APRIL 4-10 - Hate Week in the novel 1984  
 APRIL 4 - Maya Angelou (62)  
 APRIL 6 - PHIL AUSTIN (49)  
 APRIL 7 - Daniel Ellsberg (59); Wordsworth (b. 1770)  
 APRIL 9 - PAUL KRASSNER (58); Tom Lehrer (62); W.C. Fields (b. 1879)  
 APRIL 12 - Tiny Tim (68); David Letterman (43)  
 APRIL 13 - Madelyn Murray O'Hair (71); Thomas Jefferson (b. 1743)  
 APRIL 14 - Gerry Anderson (61)  
 APRIL 17 - KERRY THORNLEY (52)  
 APRIL 18 - SF Earthquake of '06, Clarence Darrow (b.1857)  
 APRIL 20 - Harold Lloyd (b. 1874) (54)  
 APRIL 22 - Earth Day 20th Anniversary; Jack Nicholson  
 APRIL 22-28 - National Library Week, Pro Secretaries Week, Reading Is Fun Week (IJ HIGH HOLYWEEK)  
 APRIL 23-38 - National Intimate Apparel Week  
 APRIL 23 - Shakespeare (b. 1564); Roy Orbison (b. 1936); Shirley Temple Black (62)  
 APRIL 24 - Library of Congress est. (1800); Shirley MacLaine (56 in this life)  
 APRIL 25 - Secretaries Day; Marconi (b. 1874); Edward R. Murrow (b. 1908)  
 APRIL 27 - Alfred Packer Day (hi Michael!)

(EVENTS continued on page 6)



## ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

First the good news. Many of you will be receiving this issue at our annual **INSIDE JOKE** party—if so, welcome! Mingle, have a good time, enjoy, etc. So glad you could make it! Hope you had no trouble finding the place, hope you like the house, hope to see you again soon...

Now the bad news. Due to a myriad reasons, not the least of which are money (you do know the Postal Office is planning to stick consumers for 5¢ more for the first ounce and 3¢ more for each subsequent ounce come next January, don't you? That'd cost 76¢ to send out each issue of IJ, and that's not even including Canada!) and, more importantly, time (my situation at work foremost, followed by my desire to shift my time into different activities), **INSIDE JOKE** will be going on an "indefinite hiatus" with #80. This should give everyone enough time to wrap things up and spread the word, while I attempt to sponge IJ from the various small press directories in which we're listed in time for 1991. Calling it quits with #80 rounds off our run pretty nicely, especially considering we'll actually have put out 88 issues when one counts the Forgotten Eight of the infamous Uncle Floyd-dedicated Volume One. And everyone who's sent in money for advance subscriptions will pretty much get everything for which they've paid, although I do hasten to remind loyal readers that I've tried to emphasize in each issue that advance sub money is non-refundable (if anyone who's paid feels really gypped I'll send you back issues to make up the difference when all is said and done).

I don't want to go on too much longer about all this, except to say I've thought long and hard about it, and at this point would rather nobody tried to talk me out of taking a rest. Fortunately, there are plenty of other zines out there which are only too delighted to accept submissions of the caliber we've been lucky enough to attract; some of them are listed in our latest installment of "Fan Noose" in this very issue. As the time draws nearer, I'll expound more upon what's in store with any future projects emanating from our palatial post office box (which I've decided to retain, probably in the name of "Elayne Wechsler-Chaput" once IJ goes on hiatus). Until then, I implore once again—enjoy!

Welcome to our new contributors Victor Fleischer, Robert Godwin, Mark Henkes, Ronald Johnson, Barry Lank, Floyd Leavitt, Charles Rampp, Eric Rhodes and Amber Rollins; welcome back to Vinnie Bartilucci, Paul Creighton and Sigmund Weiss; and thank you to J.C. Brainbeau and John Doucet for their generous donations, as well as to all of you who kicked in that extra 50¢ to receive this issue—every little bit helps when your rent doubles! I also appreciate greatly all you folks who sent in your stuff camera-ready—my typing time grows ever shorter, as does my temper with my home typewriter (which, though fixed, will never be 100%—and as I am no longer able to use a typewriter at work, only my computer, I have to make do as best I can). I won't bore you with a litany of everything in these pages, except to let you know Steve's made up for his absence from #73 with an uncharacteristically long column, Arni's back, the Kid and Kathy have also returned, and Gary would be here if I hadn't lost his submission this time—everybody at the party please extend him your sympathy and give me dirty looks, that oughta make him feel better about this mess...

Okay, here's the scoop now. The deadline for our next issue, our Diamond Jubilee #75, is the end of this month, March 31; with any luck, #75 will contain my mid-season "...Or Not TV" reviews as well as the Gerber (round-robin story) we'll be collectively creating at the party. The deadline for #76 is May 15. Copies of IJ, including sample issues, cost \$1.50 each, and I will accept non-refundable advance subs through issue #80 only (\$9 for all six). If your writing or art is accepted in #75, you have the option of sending me a 65¢ stamp (not 65¢ in coin or check, postage only—I cannot attach coin or check to the back of an IJ for mailing!) instead of the \$1.50 cash/check/money order as a "contributor's discount" on a one-issue-only basis. No more than two copies of any IJ issue per customer, please; I'm running low again and can't afford to make more copies. I'm sorry I can't offer IJ in trade for any other zine; I wish I could. Canadians, please send me postal money orders only; my bank won't cash the usual checks for some odd reason. Make everything payable to "Elayne Wechsler"—I won't be changing my account to my married name until next year. If an "X" appears on your mailing label, it's time to renew. IJ is also available from SohoZat, those wonderful folks. Thanks again to all you kind people who've mentioned us in your publications or radio shows. Please buy back issues (\$1.50 each)! If I've left anything out, I'm sure it's on our Writers'/Artists' Guidelines, available for a SASE. Send letters, writing, art, etc. to:

P.O. Box 1609, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10159.

This issue is dedicated to Del Shannon and Johnny Ray (surely you didn't think I'd dedicate it to that old poofa Forbes?!).

\* **INSIDE JOKE** is put on biweekly by Elayne "For The Time Being" Wechsler and lots of good and dear friends, and emanates from beautiful downtown Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, where you can tell it's spring because the car alarms are blooming...

\* **CONCIERGE**.....ELAYNE WECHSLER  
 \* **PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**.....STEVE CHAPUT

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# DIARY of The ROCK FIEND



by  
Anni Ackner

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

All right, boys and girls, gather 'round and sit real quietly now—yes, that means you, Ace darling. The kitty doesn't want to be squeezed until his eyes pop out—and Aunt Anni will tell you a lovely story until the nice Nintendo man gets here and tells us why all the Super Mario Brothers don't want to play with us any more. Well, Pru dear, I know you felt sorry for Mother Brain, but I'm still not sure that putting Marshmallow Fluff inside the system was exactly the right thing to do, are you?

Anyway, are we all nice and cozy now? Good. Okay then, once upon a time, so long ago that we won't even begin to talk about it, there lived a beautiful, intelligent, witty, sophisticated commentator on the American Scene, and her name was Anni. (Elliot, if you don't stop those awful gagging noises, you can march straight up to your room.) Because she was so beautiful and talented and intelligent and good and so forth, everybody in the world loved Anni, and showered her with praise and compliments and many priceless gifts, all of which she modestly accepted with such charm and grace that she made even more friends and admirers with every honour bestowed upon her. (Elliot, that's enough.) But there was one creature in the world that did not love Anni; just one, but that one was enough. The Evil Fairy Fran was very jealous of Anni and of the way she was such a general favourite with everybody else, and one day, when Anni was 16 years old and the Evil Fairy Fran was much, much older, she decided to place a terrible spell on poor Anni.

So saying, the Evil Fairy Fran flew to her dark, cramped, ugly, overpriced palace on the upper west side of a terrible, sinful city, and began to prepare a noxious brew. Oh, the mysterious, hideous, poisonous potions she poured into her pot! Sparkling waters from a chemical-ridden spring in France. Apples coated with deadly waxes and sprays. Peculiar lettuces. Dark, blackened redfish. Seaweed and raw tuna. Opium and Obsession and Infiniti. (Yes, Elayne, there is NutraSweet in the cocoa. If you don't like it, you can pay the dentist bills from now on.) All this and more she brewed, and as the mixture rolled and bubbled, she stirred and stirred and stirred her cauldron, all the while intoning the hideous magic words, "Michaelmusto! Breteastonellis! Tamajanowitz! Jaymcinerny!"

Suddenly, a tremendous cloud of purple smoke arose from the mixture and filled the room with malodorous fumes, and the Evil Fairy Fran cackled and cackled, for she knew her concoction was a success, and the time was right to carry out her evil plans. In a voice as cold and skeletal as a roomful of Norma Kamali runway models, the Evil Fairy Fran began to chant her dreadful words:

"From this day forward, from this day until the end of time, there will be only slight adulation and praise from only the most discerning for Anni, for even I, with all my great power, can't do away with it entirely, so widespread is it. Instead, from now until forever, rather than exercising her many talents and pursuing her art and receiving large sums of money for this, Anni will have to work for a living! Forevermore!!!"

And chortling with fiendish glee at what she'd done, the Evil Fairy Fran put on her best pair of 501's and went out and had dinner with Sandra Bernhardt.

(Now, now, I don't know what's keeping the nice Nintendo man, but don't worry, sweeties. He's sure to come, because he knows that when he gets here he's going to get something very important that just about everybody wants—a nice big piece of Aunt Anni's mind.)

So it was that poor, dear, kind, sweet, lovable, talented, adorable Anni (Elliot) was forced to go out into the world and actually work for a living. No more did she receive priceless gifts and the worship of the masses, but rather, she had to make do with an occasional cheery letter from some gentle soul who had not forgotten her—for which she was immensely grateful, even though they just about never enclosed checks—while day after day she had to work, work, work at the most awful, tedious, back-breaking jobs, and for all the worst sorts of people. Can you imagine it, boys and girls? (Yes, Deborah, I'm sure that you can.) Oh, it's hard to describe the disagreeable things that Anni was called upon to do. Long hours she spent at typewriters and word processors, valiantly struggling to put punctuation, grammar and coherency into the ramblings of lazy, uneducated men who spent all of their time in far-off lands like The Boardroom and The Bahamas, riding magical conveyances called Expense Accounts. Oh, the envelopes she licked, the reservations she made, the dry-cleaning she picked up—on her own time, mind you—and those horrid, horrid hours spent bending and unbending paper clips and shuffling invoices around on her desk, all in a valiant attempt to "look busy" lest one of the terrifying creatures called "Bosses" should happen to accidentally get back early from the golf course. Many were the nights she dragged herself back to her humble flat, weary and heartsick and, after eating her simple meal all alone, and toiling several more hours at some fabulously humorous tale or legend—for through it all she never lost her amazing talent, nor her wit—destined for a publication that would not pay for it, would cry herself to sleep,

dreaming of better days.

This went on for several years until, one evening, an extremely tall and remarkably pale Genie named Ed, Jr. heard of Anni's plight and, feeling pity for her, and being currently at liberty after a disastrous box office flop, made up his mind to help her if he could. As she sat nodding over yet another wonderful and under-appreciated tale, he came to her in a dream and said:

"Because you are so kind and good, so thoughtful and lovable, so witty and talented, so all of everything that's fine" (All right, young man. Upstairs, now! And no stopping to watch Gilligan's Island on the way, either) "I'm going to try and lighten your burden. Unfortunately, I can't break the spell completely—not if I don't want my name splashed all over Spy next month, anyway—but I can change it a little, and make it easier to bear. From this day forward, though you will still have to work for a living, you will no longer have to slave away in offices for people who are beneath your contempt. Instead, you will own your own children's bookstore, and make your way in that manner."

A children's bookstore! Anni cut a caper of joy, for in her wildest imaginings she had never envisioned such a happy solution to her dilemma. How perfect a career, for someone with both her famous adoration of all children and her high regard for modern literature! As she attempted to adequately convey her thanks to the friendly and excessively large Genie, Ed, Jr. held up his hand.

"I'm afraid it's not quite as good as all that," he said sadly. "You see, before anything can be done in the way of reaping the rewards of having a store—any sort of store, not just a children's bookstore—there are Ten Tasks that must be accomplished in order to prove that one is worthy of, and capable of handling, such a situation. They are Ten arduous, draining, debilitating Tasks indeed, and the fact that I think you can manage them means relatively little. The point is, do you think you can get through them?"

"Oh, yes," Anni said, without a moment's hesitation, although her heart had quailed at the mention of the Ten Terrible Tasks. Nevertheless, she was determined to go on, certain that her many years of working for a living had fitted her for whatever desperate situations the Tasks required.

"All right, then," Ed, Jr. said and, with a wave of his hand, and a mumbled magic word that sounded suspiciously like "Visamas-tercardamericanexpress," he produced a scroll of parchment and told Anni to study it carefully, follow its instructions to the letter, and, at the end, she would have her bookshop. Then, with a bow and a fervent "Good luck, kid," he was off in a cloud of smoke.

Anni sat for a moment, looking at the scroll, almost afraid to open it, afraid to believe her good luck. Then, gathering up all her courage, she picked up the scroll, unrolled it, and this is what she read:

## TEN TERRIBLE TASKS TO BE PERFORMED IN ORDER TO ENSURE WORTHINESS FOR SHOP OWNERSHIP or, Shop Till You Drop

1. Have Your Head Examined: No real explanation is required for this first Terrible Task, as it is fairly obvious—and just about inarguable—why anyone about to quit an eight-hour-a-day gig with paid vacation and bennies in order to take on a situation that will require him or her to work 14 hours a day with no days off, no steady paycheck and no one to blame anything on except him or herself would want to look into it. If it is not immediately obvious, you may skip this Task, as it is readily apparent that you have the intelligence and foresight required to become a successful shop owner.
2. Tell Everyone You Know That You Are Considering Opening Your Own Shop: If you can manage to get through the ensuing hoots, jeers, catcalls, howls of laughter, well-meaning suggestions that you repeat Terrible Task #1, and dire predictions that you will go broke inside of six months and be forced to take up residence in the nearest church basement without once abandoning your intention, running screaming into the night or, at the very least, punching some formerly dear friend soundly in the belly, you will have proven that you have the necessary intestinal strength and fortitude to become a successful shop owner. It is, while performing this Task, quite permissible to begin smoking upwards of two packs of unfiltered cigarettes per day and to wake up screaming at 4:00 in the morning after hideous dreams of Sy Sperling.
3. Begin To Go About Town, Looking At Available Selling Spaces: Make sure you view at least one that comes already equipped with its own rats, one with a large, gaping, suspiciously human-shaped hole in the display window, one with a lovely dirt floor, and one that the landlord would be happy to subdivide if you wouldn't mind settling in next to a fledgling movie studio that specializes in peculiarly short and repetitious films, before finally deciding to rent the one that's too small by 500 square feet, contains no storage space, no fixtures, and shares a bathroom down the block with the local toxic waste dump.
4. Sign A Lease That Requires You To Part With At Least A Thousand Dollars More Than You Have In Your Checking Account And Periodically Perform Complicated And Unusual Physical Acts With The Landlord: Repeat Terrible Task #1.
5. Begin To Investigate And Comply With The Local Business And Retail Ordinances In Your Part Of The Country: Rest assured that, no matter how careful you are, or how painstakingly you attempt to adhere to each and every rule, regulation, paragraph, sub-paragraph and footnote listed in each and every zoning law, you are going to wind up in violation of, at best, three of them or, at worst, all of them, and, further, there isn't a damned thing you can do about it, either. This is particularly true if you have

(continued next page)

made the grave tactical error of choosing to locate in a so-called "historical district"—meaning any district that pre-dates the Viet Nam War and is home to any number of old maids of both sexes with absolutely nothing better to do than to meet twice a month and levy fines against anyone silly enough to think that just because he or she pays the rent on the location, he or she has a sort of right to have that location decorated in a way that he or she finds pleasing—in which case it is a foregone conclusion that your lovely sky-blue wooden sign on its beautiful ornate brackets is going to be deemed an eyesore, even though it cost you \$280.00, and you are going to be forced to remove it and substitute something shaped like a profile of Patrick Henry. Learn to live with it.

6. Have The Utilities Connected: Learn that, even though you have been paying your personal utility bills in your town on time for the last three years without a miss, the utility companies all harbour a deep-seated belief that you intend to skip town at your earliest possible convenience and have thus determined amongst themselves to charge you such huge security deposits as to preclude your purchasing so much as a subway token. Live on Fruity Pebbles for the next three weeks.

7. Open A Company Checking Account: Discover that every bank in the vicinity has been having afternoon tea with the utility companies, and now labours under the delusion that your hobby is embezzling funds. Resign yourself to paying \$35.00 apiece for each of your checks.

8. Contact Distributors And Begin To Purchase Your Stock: It is probably wise to take a Berlitz course right about now, as you will be forced to quickly assimilate an entirely new and confusing language, in which "You'll have it on Tuesday" means "You'll have it the first Tuesday of next month," "You'll have it in three business days" means "You'll have it in the first three business days of absolutely free enterprise in the People's Republic of China," and "We ship on receipt of check" means "The shipping clerk has been diagnosed with Epstein-Barr Syndrome." You will rapidly discover that your only socially acceptable response to any of these statements is "Okay, fine," which loosely translates as "Yes, oh Exalted One, your humble servant fully realizes that if he or she protests at all, the shipment will accidentally be delivered to the contagious ward of a Third World hospital."

9. Contact The Newspaper: Discover That A One-Quarter Page Opening Day Ad Costs \$2,183.56: Beat your head slowly and rhythmically against the \$700 shelves you just had installed.

10. Discover, Ten Days Before Your Scheduled, Advertised, Cust-In-Stone Opening, That Godiva Chocolates Has Chosen Precisely The Same Day To Open Its New Outlet Shop, And Is Giving Away Samples: If this does not automatically trigger your long-awaited nervous breakdown, you will have, once and for all, proven that you are the sort of person—possessed of stamina, inner strength, courage of convictions, and the brain of a Pez dispenser—who should indisputably own his or her own shop. Goodbye, good luck and remember—better people than you have spent periods of their lives sleeping under bushes by the sides of freeway on-ramps.

After she finished reading the scroll, Anni knew precisely what she had to do and—what's that, J.P.? Yes, I know I said it was a dream, but, you know, sometimes dreams do come true and sometimes they sort of spill over into reality and...what? Oh my goodness, there's the doorbell. Don't you think we should all go and see if it isn't the nice Nintendo man? Yes, let's hurry. Let's run. And after he leaves, perhaps we can all go downtown and see if the new Godiva outlet has burned down yet. Won't that be fun? Well, won't it?



36 E

#### WHAT MEANING HAVE YOU?

by Mary Ann Henn

I wander aimlessly pondering  
alone in silence confounding.  
Death faceless devouring  
silencing swing reducing.  
Life is a desire.

Death is coming home.  
How to mourn? With tears  
with silence with a song.

## THREE KIDS, A DOG, A CAT & A HUSBAND A JOB, THE HOUSE AND THE LAUNDRY

or, Why I was Missing from Last Issue

by Kathy Stadalsky

They say life in the rural areas is supposed to be peaceful, calm, relaxing, and laid back.

I guess we were never intended to move to the country.

My kids are the only ones I know that can destroy a clean house in less time than it takes to say "hang up your coats!"

My baby, Amanda, who is now only 22 months old, can trash a room in less than five minutes. And I mean trash it. We're not talking about throwing a couple things on the floor and just a generic mess—we're talking heavy duty, a-number-one, first class gold ribbon earning trashing.

Right at this particular moment, for instance, my bathroom floor is sporting a conglomeration featuring large quantities of green and yellow talcum powder (Miss Lemon and Miss Lime—or, to be more precise, vice versa), several liberal squirts of Vaseline Intensive Care Handcream, and seven full tubes (each holding 3 inches by 1/2 inch in diameter) of multi-colored glitter.

To make matters worse, my bathroom floor is carpeted. Which

means we will be stepping on glitter for the next decade or two. I can envision it now...

There's Bob, the God of Ohio, out at a high class business meeting talking his little heart out and no one is listening to him: they're all watching his feet, because his black socks are shimmering in the lights! What's that little flash of red we keep seeing on your ankles, Bob? Is that GLITTER?

Anna and Maggie, of course, are tickled shitless over the deal: I caught them in the bathroom with hairbrushes and hairspray which was being used thus: spray the brush with the hair spray, then, quickly, before the stuff congeals, run the brush over the carpet to collect the glitter. Now run the brush through your hair so you can go to school tomorrow and make all the teachers think your parents are doing drugs and worshipping Satan in bizarre glitter-throwing ceremonies.

We went to the store tonight and bought the obligatory valentine cards for trading with your class.

The interesting thing here is that the price of the doggone things keeps going up, but the quality of the cards keeps going down.

I shamelessly opened the one that advertised "50 for the price of 36" (which it was, because the ones with 36 were \$1.78 and the ones with 50 were \$1.78—come to think of it, the ones with only 25 were also \$1.78...hmm, I smell a conspiracy here...), anyhow, I opened the top, oblivious to the sign which declared "DO NOT OPEN BOXES!" (my reasoning being that I wasn't opening a box, I was opening the cellophane covering on a cardboard tray) and inspected said valentines. There were 50 of them, but they were 8 to a sheet, versus 4 to a sheet of the other brands.

(For you non-parents, I'll translate: a normal box of valentines features a 6x6 sheet with 4 valentines imprinted on it. If you buy the 36 count box you get 9 sheets per box. THESE VALENTINES, however, had 8 to a sheet, you got 5 sheets of them and there were five "teacher" cards in the box.)

Naturally, of course, my children would have been humiliated and wouldn't have been able to go back to school ever if I had forced them to take in tacky, chintzy little valentines that you would barely have enough room to write your name on the back of (and wouldn't be able to if your name was Maggie, because you are incapable of writing more than two letters per square inch anyhow).

Since I couldn't deprive my children of a quality education (what are you NUTS? Keep the monsters HOME?!), I had to buy the better valentines.

Anna's taking in ALP, Maggie opted for ROGER RABBIT. I, myself would've chosen the DUCKTALES, but my kids informed me that DUCKTALES weren't cool, and furthermore, they were for babies, not mature first and fourth graders like themselves.

We then went into the shoe department of this large major retail establishment (not K-MART, you heathens: HILLS, which is almost as bad, but has a bigger selection of junk that you simply HAVE to have) and purchased a pair of pink flat canvassy-rubber soled casual shoes for me to wear with jeans (having poked my toes through the tops of my white woven ones I bought at BIG WHEELS, last year. (BIG WHEELS is even less classy than K-MARTS or HILLS. My kids call it "broken spokes" and refuse to acknowledge that they EVER go there—let alone admit that their mom actually buys them clothing there. God help 'em when they find out where Santa shops!))

My children, of course, pronounced them "ugly" and "really gross, mom" and said they hoped I wouldn't wear them to school when I come in for conferences or to pick them up or anything. I told them I'd be sure to save the ones with my toes poking through the tops for conference day and wear the other ones with the soles that are separating from the shoes on the days when I come to pick them up.

Anna told her father to come to the conferences and not to let me pick them up any more. They want to ride the bus every day.

Bob then hiked his britches up as high as possible and poked his stomach way out like he was due to pop out a young'un any second and said "well, gawrsh, Annie, I'll be sure to do that".

Unfortunately for our children, a classmate and his hopelessly normal parents was coming around the aisle at just about this point in the episode, and, well, I'll tell you, friends, it's a horrible thing to see kids humiliated like that.

I told Anna she should be thankful she has such weird parents and doesn't have to be shamed like that little boy was.

Interestingly enough, our kids acted like they were the ones embarrassed—but I told Bob that's just because they're such good, wonderful kids that they wanted the little boy to know how bad they felt for him.

I mean, it ain't every kid would have that much empathy, is it?

Well, after our Humiliating Trip To Hills, we decided to make it up to the kids by taking them to the Dairy Queen for an ice cream sundae.

Unfortunately, Dairy Queen is closed this time of year, so they had to content themselves with sitting in the car imagining what kind of sundae they'd get and how it'd taste.

I imagined mine would be a Hot Fudge Double Nutty, but the nuts would be burnt, the fudge would be cold and the ice cream would be melted and soupy. I was really glad they were closed, let me tell you!

Gee, guess, what? It's nighty-night time in the country...all around the road, lights are going out (security lights are coming on, though), people are taking themselves up to bed (first checking all the windows and doors to be sure they're bolted shut) and smuggling in with a good book and a .38.

Ahh, ain't life grand?



# Fan Noose

by  
Elayne  
Wechsler



Never fear, folks, as IJ goes on hiatus there are plenty of great zines looking for contributors! I've tried to mark the publications "Seeking Submissions" appropriately (SS) below, but first, a few announcements: This first should've been in Steve's comics column, but as I'd filed it with my zines I'll record it instead. I got a lovely letter from old IJ friend Will Shetterly (check out his 6 Emma Bull's sf reviews in UTNE READER), who says he "sent out three comics proposals to a few publishers. The only interest was in CONFEDERATES. Apple Comics made the best offer, so I accepted that, then waited for contracts that never showed. When I called them, I heard that Apple is struggling to survive, and still wants to do CONFEDERATES

if they manage to get through the year...I've written the first two scripts and plotted a couple more...I decided to get back to writing novels." Look for Will's third, *The Tangled Lands* (Ace), at local bookstores; good luck, Will!...Rodney Leighton wants to announce the imminent release of his reviewzine, *THE LEIGHTON LOOK*—if you want some exposure for your stuff, why not send him a copy? Maybe he'll become the Canadian version of *FACTSHEET FIVE*, you never know! He's at R.R. #2, Pugwash, Nova Scotia BOK 1L0 CANADA...From time to time folks still send me erotica and other stuff that's More Than I Need To Know, and I hate rejecting some of these pieces out of hand but I never know where else to refer them. Well, a fellow in San Fran is "putting together a publication of the best sex writing I can find" which he hopes will also include political writings and a current events news roundup on topics concerning sex/censorship/civil rights, etc. He also appears to have a good line on other sex pubs, so for more information on stuff *MTINTK*, write *HEAT SEEKING PUBLISHING*, 41 Sutter St. #1108, San Francisco, CA 94108...I'll say one thing for him, Ernest Mann is (besides being a cool pseudonym) certainly persistent! His collection of *Pricelless Economic System* (i.e., life without/beyond money) pamphlets, collectively called *LITTLE FREE PRESS*, is now spewing forth from his new home at 2714 1st Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55408, and he's looking for folks to help circulate his ideas (especially zines short on submissions, which of course IJ is not). I don't get or agree with many of his ideas, but at least he makes you think, which has to be a plus...Think you know everything there is to know about Jay Ward? Dana; Jed? Well, guys (and everyone else), you oughta check out *THE FROSTBITE FALLS FAR-FLUNG FLIER*, the Jay Ward zine! Included within are reviews of many of Ward's shows (I found especially fascinating the story on *CRUSADER RABBIT* which detailed all the pro-union dialogue which got excised prior to the released version), trivia quizzes, mentions of *ROCKY & BULLWINKLE*, etc. in "everyday life" (much like a column I started doing for the Firesign newsletter called "Hot Flashes") and every kind of Ward-related comprehensive listing one could ever want! Highly recommended; write to editor Charles Ulrich c/o Swick, 6002 Redondo Ct. NW, Albuquerque, MN 87107—the price is \$5/4 issues and back issues are available for \$1.25 each...Might as well plug the Firesign zine, while I mention it. As many of you know, for 5-6 years I published *Four-Alarm FIRESIGNAL*, a zine for members and friends of The Firesign Theatre (if you've never heard of this avant-garde comedy troupe, scope out some of their records; you won't be disappointed!), thrice yearly. Well, I've turned over the reins now to Michael Packer and Jim Middleton out in Michigan, who will be incorporating a 4-page *FIRESIGNAL* into their new magazine *SPARKS*, set to debut next month! *SPARKS* is "The Magazine of Creative Audio," so if you have or know of any, write 'em! Subs are \$10/3 issues or \$3.50 each, and Michael's address is P.O. Box 3540, Grand Rapids, MI 49501...Speaking of creative audio, one of the shows *SPARKS* will mention is the Minnesota (did they corner the market on good radio or what?)—based "Little City in Space," a comedy/scifi/etc. show that's so good I highly recommend it and I haven't even listened to it yet (well, Steve has, and he loves it)! LCS puts out its own zine, *THE VOID POST*, which they produce from KFAI Fresh Air Radio, 1518 East Lake St., Minneapolis, MN 55407 (do tell Jerry Modjeski I sent you!)...Elsewhere in comedy, the death of Graham Chapman saddened us all, but his work will live on, as will that of the rest of the troupe of Monty Python's Flying Circus. The best way to keep up with Python happenings is to subscribe to *IT'S*, put out whenever she can get the money by whiz-kid Sheila Gibson (aka Easel), 20 Shady Lane, Nashua, NH 03062 (SS; \$2/issue)...Chapman is also given a nice tribute in a 20th anniversary Python article included among the gems in a new publication, *THE PRESIDENT JOURNAL*. Editor Jazzy Tee (Chris Laursen) has already made me a member of The President Posse, which I think means either supporter or staff writer, and I hope to write some stuff for them shortly. This is definitely one of the places to check out as IJ winds down, as it's looking for the same type of submissions (skewed more toward the reviews-of alternative-media angle, but also accepting fiction and art, same

as us); they're bimonthly, cost \$3/issue or \$18/year (Canadian or US, although I'm sure they'd appreciate IRCs from US subscribers), and look like they'll be terrific based on their first issue! I'm really psyched about being a part of this, and I hope you will be too—write to them c/o General Delivery, Tofield, AB T0B 4J0 CANADA...IJ fiction writers might want to also consider sending stuff to LE SOUTERRAIN, especially if it helps push out some of the more sexist writings in their latest issue. Recommended with several reservations—can't find a price, so write to editor Jonathan D. Fine (aka Jonathan Zinlord), 1460 Hinesburg Rd., So. Burlington, VT 05403...I also have reservations in recommending *EGGHEAD* (or: *How I Changed The World*) from Donna Nicolino, mainly because I discovered her two main contributors in the issue I read, Elliot Cantsin and Dennis Brezina, sent her the very same stuff they sent me for publication in IJ! Thanks a lot, guys—don't you read our Writers' Guidelines?! I don't want to publish any writing that gets published elsewhere, because the point of IJ is to provide an outlet for stuff that isn't published anywhere else! How can I give a plug to a zine that features stuff IJ readers have already seen? It's redundant and unfair. But I don't blame Donna in this and the best way to remedy the situation is to send her your non-IJ writing and art so she can build a mutual and crossover audience for her own fine work (including some nice politically-aware writing). No price listed, so write to her at 2161 Burroughs St., San Diego, CA 92111 (hint to Donna: discover 2-sided copying!)...If you thought backwoods hicks had it bad in *Deliverance*, you ain't seen nothin' yet! Meet the Snopeses, a cross between the Addams Family, The Simpsons and six generations of intermarrying cousins (or something like that), in *THE SNOPESES GO CAMPING*, a serialized novel by Stephanie du Plessis. A dollar a chapter and I'm transfixed already; and I love the purloined possum recipe! Write to Stephanie at P.O. Box 4697, San Francisco, CA 94101...It hasn't been out in awhile, but you never know, and I wanted to give a plug to my friend Samantha Lowry for her zine *DISAPPROVED THEORIES*. I certainly can't approve all the theories within, but Sam's writing is wonderful. For more info write her at P.O. Box 1886, Cambridge, MA 02238-1886...At long last (after, I notice, I bet them a bag of M&Ms that it would never happen), *STICKY CARPET DIGEST* is out—not only out, but publishing monthly (they're up to #3 already)! Good job by IJ staffers and friends Tom DeJa, Winnie Bartilucci and Dorian Tenore-Bartilucci on this psychotronic culture zine, now doing brisk business on consignment at weird stores all over New York but yours for a mere buck to Unstable Gables, 86 Willow St., Floral Park, NY 11001 (watch for more of my writing in here soon as well)...Other IJ staffers have been busy as well: Wayne Hogan has put together a clever pamphlet idea, a *POEM- & DRAWING-OF-THE-MONTH*, to which you can subscribe for \$10 a year (\$10, Wayne? Seems a bit steep for one 7 1/2 x 8 1/2 sheet a month) by writing him at P.O. Box 842, Cookeville, TN 38503...I'm delighted to say that Ace Backwords (featured recently in the editorial cartoon magazine *COMIC RELIEF*, in there among Duck's Breath, Joe Bob Briggs and Dave Barry in their February '90 issue—\$2.50 from Page One Publishers & Bookworks Inc., P.O. Box 6606, Eureka, CA 95502) is back on a monthly publishing schedule with his *TWISTED IMAGE*, a collection of his comic strips, reviews and letters to the editor, all for \$1 a month to Ace at 1630 University Ave. #26, Berkeley, CA 94703...And MasterMath himself, William Raley, is still inviting writers to poke around in the scary dark for his quarterly mag *AFTER HOURS* (\$4 from him at 21541 Oakbrook, Mission Viejo, CA 92692-3044)—he even pays! Great fiction, tho I'm a little behind in my reading on this...Lest we forget, enigmatic IJ staffer Kerry Thornley regularly outputs one-page sheets with such titles as *THE DECADENT WORKER*, *KULTCHA*, *OUT OF ORDER* and other rantings full of conspiracy theories, Zenarchist musings and other thoughts floating around in Kerry's life and brain—interesting stuff, to be sure, and free from P.O. Box 5498, Atlanta, GA 30307...Kerry, Anni and many others also contribute to *FACTSHEET FIVE*, about which most of you know, but I want to plug Mike Gunderloy's reviewzine mightily anyway. This is the source for those of you who want to find out more about (just about all the) zines and weird publications around now (unlike Stang's excellent *HIGH WEIRDNESS BY MAIL*, FF is updated every other month), and about how to start your own zine if you're so inclined. This is where I'll be sending any news on the future of *INSIDE JOKE*, so to stay in touch with us, you really have to stay in touch with Mike at 6 Arizona Avenue, Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502 (at only \$3 an issue, FF is the best bargain around, and congrats to Mike, who's actually making a living off it finally!)...Many people do zines mainly to communicate with the "outside world," and Jay Harber, suffering from unknown nervous system/eye disorders, craves that communication more than many. He hand-writes *NOTES FROM OBLIVION* very large, then reduces the pages to form a personal letter (and artwork) to friends. To reach out to Jay, write him at 626 Paddock Lane, Libertyville, IL 60048-3733...Also back from seeming oblivion are a few zines I've missed reading: On their way to Europe again, T.S. Child and Denver Tucson managed to squeeze in one more issue of *THE MONTHLY INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE TIMES JOURNAL POST GAZETTE NEWS CHRONICLE BULLETIN*—no Bone Family this time, but a bit of fun for free anyway; for a copy write to 2510 Bancroft Way #207, Berkeley, CA 94704...Sigmund Weiss not only makes his return to our pages this issue, but has put together a beautiful chapbook of love poems to his late wife Dora. If you're interested in a copy, Sigmund's at 11 Lancaster Place, Stony Brook, NY 11790...It's also good to see another issue at last of *THE SWEET RIDE*, a quirky "rock'n'roll magazine" of short stories and essays put out by Randy Russell (1320 West 116th St. #9, Cleveland, OH 44102) and sent out free.

(continued next page)

## Get more "Fan Noose"!

The best surprise in issue #13 is the return of Elissa Rashkin, who's relocated from NY to Ohio but still writes with fire...If collage is your thing, Joe Schwind's always got another one-pager cooking. The last one I got was called CULTURE DROP, it's free, and Joe's at P.O. Box 256, Fort Collins, CO 80522—he'd love to use your paper product!...I don't know why I keep getting stuff from science fiction fans in Wisconsin, but I know we have a few fans—uh, 'scuse me, FEN—who read IJ now and again, so I wanted to tell you that SPENT BRASS is a nice representation of this type of publication, and its co-editor, Andy Hooper, is an excellent writer. One might wish he didn't restrict himself to this insular clique, but that's his business. For a free (in fandom, "free" means send him a "loc"—letter of comment—or your own fanzine or usually a buck or so) copy of SB, write 315 N. Ingersoll St., Madison, WI 53703...The latest EXPRESSO TILT, which editor Mike Walsh (737 Wharton St., Philadelphia, PA 19147) is always kind enough to send me even though he knows much of its humor is MTINTK, features the usual sex, bathroom stuff, making fun of folk unlike the writers, and a great article on S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Kansas. Speaking of Kansas, my hands-down favorite tale of this or any other zine I've read recently is Joan C. Connor's "Under the Rainbow," about the real Elvira Gulch. It's worth the \$2 for this story alone...More in the way of nyuk-nyuk humor is KNUCKLEHEAD PRESS, kind of like a Yossarian Universal with real celebs' names. Cute; \$5 a year from Chris Mksanek and Jim Riley, Box 305, Burbank, CA 91503...A few plugs for IJ friends past and present: Dennis Brezina's AMERICA'S AT OUR DOORSTEP is a wonderful chronicle of life at a bed & breakfast (including the garden on the South Slope, of course) and is free in exchange for correspondence to P.O. Box 411, Churchton, MD 20733...Eric Ewing may have departed the IJ fold, but he's still churning out his SASQUATCH sheets periodically—wonderful and bizarre reading, just a stamp or so to Eric at P.O. Box 126, Milford, ME 04461...Three buddies from my Firesign newsletter days would like me to plug their projects: New SPARKS! co-editor Jim Middleton, in addition to supplying IJ with delightful cartoons, also puts out a wonderful yearly offering, UNCLE STAN'S (PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED) "WORLD OF PHARMACY" CALENDAR, in case no one gave you a wall calendar for last year's holidays either—only \$5 from the Animating Apothecary at 107 N. 27th St., Battle Creek, MI 49015 (check the back of the calendar for more special offers!)...M. Rick Felgenhauer put out a poetry collection called INSECTS ARE PEOPLE TOO, pretty much self-explanatory and available for \$2.50 from HR at P.O. Box 146486, Chicago, IL 60614...And David Wellen keeps on rockin' with his group, The Vacuums, and you can read all about their adventures in ANGRY JOE HAMPTON'S MOSQUITO MAGAZINE, a free monthly onesheet from P.O. Box 2355, Southampton, NY 11968...Speaking of music, we have a few pubs sent us by folks who'd like themselves plugged: the INDEPENDENT MUSIC CATALOG is free from (where else?) the Independent Music Network at P.O. Box 3516, Carbondale, IL 62902...Charles F. Rosenay!!!!'s got a lot to celebrate in the latest GOOD DAY SUNSHINE what with Paul McCartney's tour and all (as I recall, it's \$2.50 or so from 397 Edgewood Ave., New Haven, CT 06511-4013)...SOUND CHOICE editor David Ciuffardini assures me in a computer form letter that he's not being impersonal, but seems to have forgotten he used to trade with IJ until we had to drop our exchange policy, and the non-computerized letter I wrote him telling him so. Ah well, never mind, SC is still a good source for news and views on the independent scene, and it's huge and well worth \$3 if this is your sort of thing; they're at P.O. Box 1251, Ojai, CA 93023...I got another solicitation from co-editor Lisa Taylor of NOW WHAT (201 Evergreen St. Suite 2-2A, Vestal, NY 13850), a music mag that also does some reviews of comix, books and zines and is available for a mere \$1 for 48 hefty newsprint pages...My favorite music publication, however, continues to be BITCH (or, if you prefer, DIVA, as they'll be experimenting with alternating titles for awhile), the women's rock magazine with Bite! from the folks at San Jose Face (Suite 164, 478 W. Hamilton Ave., Campbell, CA 95008). Editor Lori Iwersky and friends write on all kinds of music involving women (and even some men) from a freshly feminist and hip perspective; well worth the \$15 for 12 issues (single issues are \$1.75)...A slicker but no less hip publication from the Bay Area was one of the first to predict what would happen to us service industry-type workers in an increasingly PROCESSED WORLD, and the information, graphics and writing in PW continue to make it something I read avidly on the subways to make me feel as if I'm not alone out there in word processing land. Some slimy types would have you believe this to be a Radical Communist Party front (more on the RCP below) or a just plain lousy read, but these are good and honest folk from everything I've read, and I recommend PW without reservation (it's \$3.50 single issue or \$12/4 issues from 41 Sutter St. #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104)...While PW is lucky to have typesetters and such, some places down our way can't even put up posters without getting harassed. Many of you have heard of the plight of Bob Z and friends at STOP-GRO (Stop Prosecuting Grass-Roots Organizers) and Artists & Writers Underground. The latest publication I've received from them is a mini called UNDERMINE COMMAND; for more information on how to help write to 125 E. 23rd St. #300, New York, NY 10010...Meanwhile, things are going down all the time in Loisaída (the Lower East Side), and just about everything you hear in the mainstream (and even some alternative) newspapers is bullshit. To get the facts on the horrible police-state situation (coming to a neighborhood near you

real soon now), send \$10 in cash (for a year's worth; single issues are \$1 each) to THE SHADOW at P.O. Box 20298, New York, NY 10009. One caveat: in an issue I missed, #8, there are apparently accusations that many local radical groups are actually fronts for the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). One of the groups they accuse is REFUSE & RESIST, a group to which I belong and which has never shown the slightest indication of RCP leanings to me (the only problem I ~~think~~ I have with R&R currently is their seeming disorganization, especially at meetings). Therefore, I'll stand by my support of R&R and plug their newest issue of COUNTERATTACK (#9, Jan/Feb '90), which gives you a lot of interesting news you aren't likely to hear elsewhere, especially concerning US concentration camps in southern Texas and the "War on Drugs" as a cover-up for a governmental attack on minorities, all for \$1 to 305 Madison Ave. Suite 1166, New York, NY 10165...More "War on Drugs" exposes are detailed in the mid-January issue of a simply marvelous newspaper which luckily found its way to me through the old OVERTHROW mailing list. The YIPPIES in New York are, except for Shadow and R&R, pretty much disorganized now (we don't even have a NORML chapter!), and ZENGER out of Wisconsin fills the gap left by OVERTHROW nicely. It's chock full of the real news on what's happening in this country, and no radical reader should leave home without it! An A+ from this peruser; subs are \$10 a year from P.O. Box 3481, Dept. S, Madison, WI 53704; yippies!...And the Emerald Triangle in northern California has its own crusader of political news and analysis, Lawrence Livermore, whose exposes of lumber companies, shoddy government/press/education and other local, national and international goings-on make LOOKOUT! a force with which to be reckoned and a damn good read besides. Copies are \$1 each from P.O. Box 1000, Laytonville, CA 95454...Wonder what else they haven't told you, and why? Read all about it in EXTRA!, the house publication of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) and my shield against the mainstream news. An absolute must-read in the Chaput household; subs are included in basic membership in FAIR, which is \$30 to 130 West 25th St., New York, NY 10001...For a comprehensive view of what's going on in the alternative and (increasingly) New Age presses, the UTNE READER is the Reader's Digest of the Left! For only \$4 an issue you get a comprehensive overview of some of tomorrow's hottest topics, today. I don't always agree with their writers, but hey, this is the only place to ever pay me for any of my writing, so I'm partial, okay? For a sub write to them at P.O. Box 1974, Marion, OH 43305...Well, barring any last-minute entries, that's enough for this installment, readers and fellow editors. Remember, "Fan Noose" is published in INSIDE JOKE twice yearly, and since IJ will be going on hiatus soon I'm only doing one more of these columns, probably right around Christmastime. Until then, see you in the funny papers!

## NURSERY



"WHICH ONE IS YOURS?"

## UPCOMING EVENTS continued.....

- APRIL 28 - Jay Leno (40)
  - APRIL 30 - Alice B. Toklas (b. 1877)
  - MAY 1 - May Day; Mother Jones (b. 1830); "Calamity" Jane (b. 1852); Jack Paar (72); Jody Collins (50)
  - MAY 2 - Benjamin Spock (87)
  - MAY 3 - Pete Seeger (72)
  - MAY 4 - Kent State - 20 years ago today
  - MAY 5 - Michael Palin (47); Karl Marx (b. 1818)
  - MAY 6 - Orson Welles (b. 1915); Freud (b. 1856)
  - MAY 9 - Candice Bergen (44)
  - MAY 10 - Fred Astaire (b. 1899)
  - MAY 11 - Mort Sahl (63); Salvador Dali (b. 1904)
  - MAY 12 - Limerick Day; George Carlin (53)
  - MAY 13 - Peter Gabriel (40)
  - MAY 14 - David Byrne (38)
  - MAY 15 - L. Frank Baum (b. 1856); Brian Eno (42);
- DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #76

# THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA THE STORY SO FAR.

by Ken Burke

## LIFE IN BLACK CANYON CITY Part III.

For years now, I've been walking to the post office to collect my mail. On the mile and a half round trip, I generally see the same people every day. My younger neighbors all wave to me or smile and nod as they drive by. The oldsters either grimace and turn their backs or ignore me. Once I waved to a regular passing motorist, (an old guy in a gold 1970 Cadillac), and he actually started to raise his hand in acknowledgment, but upon seeing me more clearly, he sharply withdrew the greeting. It's taken me a long time to learn that in Black Canyon City, the elderly resent the presence of the community's younger population, a minority to which I belong.

Having learned a lesson from some old Hippy friends of mine, I did not let the collective cold-shoulders of BCC's Senior Citizens get me down. Each day I smiled, waved and said hello to my elderly neighbors. It didn't matter to me if they didn't wave, smile, or say hello in return, because I had the grim satisfaction of knowing that at least I was trying to be friendly.

One day I thought that my persistence had finally been rewarded. The previous evening I had shaved off my beard and moustache. No big deal, I do it twice a year just for the sake of change. Usually my wife and I are the only ones who notice the difference. But as I walked to the post office I heard an unfamiliar sound. Someone was actually talking to me.

"Hey Ken! Why'd you shave off your beard?"

"Say what?" I had heard the question clearly enough but I wasn't aware that the old guy talking knew my name, and psych-wise, I found it hard to believe that he was actually talking to me.

"Why'd you shave off your beard?"

"Oh, I shave it off now and then just to see if I still have a face underneath."

"Ha-ha-ha, that's funny. 'Still have a face...' That's funny."

"Yeah, I was thinking of saving up all my old shaves and having them made up into a toupee."

"Ha-ha, a toupee?"

"Yeah, at least it'd match the hair I have left better than those poly/dacron rugs you see on TV all the time."

"Ha-ha-ha, ain't THAT the truth!"

Then the guy's wife stepped outside.

"What's going on?"

"Oh, Ken here just shaved off his beard."

"Just this very minute?"

"No ma'am," I answered "Last night."

"Oh...well...don't you look nice."

"Thank you. Well, I'd better go get the mail. See you folks later."

As I walked away I heard the man repeating my comments to his wife, and their laughter. I grinned to myself and thought "It's taken me eight years to establish some kind of dialogue with one of these Senior Citizen types. And what paves the way for me? My friendly disposition? My good standing in the community? NO! My neighbor of eight years has finally decided to talk to me because I removed some facial hair!"

Coming back from the post office, I saw the neighbor I had spoken to about my beard. He was gabbing with another senior who always seemed to ignore me. As I was about to pass his house, my neighbor pointed at me and called out.

"There he is now. Hey Ken, c'mon over here."

Then the other guy spoke.

"Shaved off your beard, eh?"

"Yessir, I try to harvest a crop of chin-whiskers about twice a year."

"Heh-heh, harvesting your 'chin-whiskers' that's rich."

As we were talking, another local senior walked over.

"Hey men, what's up?"

"Ken here shaved off his beard."

"Well danged if he didn't. Looks good."

"Thanks. My face sure feels cold though."

"Ha-ha-ha-ha..."

Then the guy in the gold 1970 Cadillac drove up, rolled down his window, and spoke.

"Mornin' young fella. You shave off your beard or sumthin'?"

"Yes sir, sure did."

"Too bad, you had a good one too. Your wife make you shave?"

"No, she likes beards. I grew it for her."

Then we started a free-wheeling five-way discussion about beards, moustaches, and wives. It was a conversation that crackled with jokes, poignant reminiscence, and droll observations. The way we were carrying on, a casual observer would have sworn we had all been close personal friends for years.

We talked for quite a while. I had as much fun listening as I did gabbing. When we finally broke up our little impromptu meeting, it was late in the morning, and I felt that I knew these men and that they liked knowing me.

For the first time since we moved here, I felt welcome in

Black Canyon City. The weight of loneliness and isolation lifted from my body. As I looked at the mountainous horizon from my porch, I felt warm and satisfied, thinking "Hey! I officially live here now. I can even prove it too. I've got neighbors!"

The following day, as I walked to the post-office, I looked forward to speaking with a few of my brand new friends. But one by one, the men I had spoken with so vividly the day before, grimaced, turned their backs, ignored my greetings, and avoided my gaze as if we had never met.



## Wax Ink

by Rory Houchens

**DRUGSTORE COWBOY SOUNDTRACK** (RCA/ Novus)--The first side of this disc is made up of an odd mix of usually "okay" songs--Desmond Dekker's "The Israelites," the Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction," John Fred/Playboy's Band's "Judy In Disguise"--but side two is where you'll find the real meat in this patty. Elliot Goldenthal has contributed fifteen tightly-wound instrumental pieces whipped into shape by synthesizers, saxophone and didjeridu, that in no time at all will have any worthwhile musical anarchist or the average dope fiend doing joint-popping backflips.

**OPERA WITHOUT WORDS** (CBS)--If you're tired of listening to the fat lady (or man) sing, then this recording may be just the thing for you, the amiable opera hater. Puccini (LA BOHEME, TOSCA) and Verdi (AIDA, RIGOLETTO) are expectedly well-represented, and you also get bits from Bizet's CARMEN, Leoncavallo's PAGLIACCI, and the beautiful intermezzo from Mascagni's CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA.

**THE LAST YEARS**--Fats Waller & His Rhythm (Bluebird/RCA)--The 63 tunes in this set ought to be proof enough that Fats Waller wasn't merely a boogie woogie hack, but a bonafide musical genius. Made up of Waller standards, barrelhouse instrumentals, unissued cuts and alternate takes, it covers all facets of Waller's talents and musical tastes, and features Fats on piano, vocals and organ. Included is a pithy booklet with biographical and recording information and candid photos.

# ANIMATION UPDATE



I recently attended my third ASIFA-East Animation Awards ceremony (this year I participated in the voting procedure for the first time). Of the dozens of films presented, only a choice few earned top honors. They ranged from 30-second commercials to 25-minute stories. Of the winning entries that were screened, highlights included "And Then I'll Stop" (Best Film of 1990), Paul Fierlinger's look at substance abuse (with an ending that took me, and the audience, by surprise); Liz Goulet's "Go To Your Room" (Best Children's Film), the story of a cat-child's punishment and how it uses its imagination to pass the time away; "Who Am I?" by Faith Hubley, who still keeps making cartoons a family affair (her daughter Emily animated it and her grandson Sam provides a voice), as she looks at the five senses through a youngster's eyes; Bill Plympton's "Plymptoons" (First Prize in Animation), an assortment of short gags (my favorites were "The Mob: The Early Years" and "Furniture Love"); and "Animated Self-Portraits" (First Prize in Direction, and winner of the Charles Samu Award), a collaborative effort of 19 animators from five countries, including Plympton, Sally Cruikshank, David Erlich (the film's producer), Jan Svankmajer, and the late Osamu Tezuka (to whose memory this film is dedicated). Two of these films, "Self Portraits" and "Plymptoons," will be featured in a future anthology of animated works from Expanded Entertainment set to debut later this year.

**FILM REVIEW:** Although *THE WIZARD OF SPEED AND TIME* is primarily a live-action film, many of its moments incorporate some animation and stop-motion photography. Suffice it to say there is never a dull moment in it. It's the story of a special-effects filmmaker (played by writer/editor/director Mike Jittlov) who wants to share his talents with the world, only to end up a victim of Hollywood's "Bureaucratic System" (BS, for short) of movie unions, etc. Jittlov originally made a number of short films (i.e., "Animato," "Speed") using his many tricks, such as pixillation and time-lapsed photography, making human cartoon characters out of himself and other actors. Some of his works were shown on "Disney's Wonderful World" (such as his three-part tribute to Mickey Mouse, "The Collector"); in fact, Disney is paid homage to in a number of ways—Mike animates himself and hundreds of film reel cans in his garage, paralleling how Walt got started. Even Disney animator Ward Kimball (one of the "Nine Old Men") makes a cameo appearance. Though the main plot is silly, it was never meant to be taken seriously to begin with. In particular, two thugs (played by Frank LaLoggia and Gary Schwartz) pull off an obvious Cheech & Chong imitation as they try to pass themselves off as cops, not fooling for a minute a real policeman (played by Philip Michael Thomas in his pre-"Miami Vice" days). Mike and his effects are the real stars of the picture, climaxed by a two-minute trip around the world by the title character (in a revised version of "Speed"). *THE WIZARD...* made its New York premiere recently at the Cinema Village, where the audience burst out in applause after the film's final seconds. Although this film is now available on home video, it doesn't do justice. See it on the big screen; you won't be disappointed.

**MAGAZINE UPDATE:** *ANIMATO!* #19 looks at the films of John Lasseter ("Tin Toy," "Knickknack"), the Disney Animation Studio in Florida, veteran Warner Bros. animator Virgil Ross, and the 50th anniversary of "Culliver's Travels," among other topics. (A friendly reminder: a four-issue subscription to *ANIMATO!* is \$10 in the US, \$15 elsewhere, and some back issues are available, so write to P.O. Box 1240, Cambridge, MA 02238).

**FRUITS (AND VEGETABLES) OF THEIR LABOR:** The "Red Pepper" award (for the hottest property) goes to "The Simpsons," Fox-TV's hit series. Many people thought that Matt Groening's characters would not survive the transition from 30-second vignettes on "The Tracey Ullman Show" to a whole half-hour program. They needn't worry. After five episodes (out of 13), word has it that another 13 shows are in pre-production. (So successful is this show that it beat out the three major networks on Sunday, 2/25—during "Sweeps Month," no less.) One unique thing about the show is its opening titles; each week, everyone wonders what new sentence Bart has to scrawl on the blackboard 100 times ("I DID NOT SEE ELVIS," or "I WILL NOT INSTIGATE REVOLUTION"). The situations for Homer's family are definitely not the norm (such as the episode in which, during a camping trip, Homer is mistaken for Bigfoot). Groening and producer Sam Simon have a winner in this Klasky-Caupo Production, so taken in an evening with "The Simpsons" (and, as Bart would say, "Don't have a cow, man!")...The "Sour Grapes" award is tied between two cable networks. The opponents in this losers' duel are TNT and Showtime. Both of these networks are the latest ones to distract their viewers from watching cartoons: TNT flashes its logo on the lower corner of the screen during almost every cartoon on its "Wild World of Shorts" series; meanwhile, Showtime is following the same format of its sister network, The Movie Channel, by leaving a continuous message on the screen ("NEXT MOVIE IN X MINUTES"). This is enough to make one go out and buy or rent home videos of the cartoons so you don't have to see those annoying interruptions (which is probably what TNT's Ted Turner had in mind, as he owns the entire MGM cartoon library, as well as all those Warner Bros. and Popeye cartoons under the AAP banner. Very shrewd)...Finally, the "Golden Banana" award (for silliness that

## DE-GREAT DE-BATE

by A.T. Hunn

"Less filling!" shouts one side of the room  
"Tastes great!" the other retorts  
And so it goes, into the night,  
Midst crunching sounds, and snorts  
'Til finally, with their bellies full,  
One looney bends an ear:  
"These bottles'd sure go down easier,  
If they'd just leave out the beer."

sells) goes to Will Vinton and his Claymation crew for their most bizarre commercial ever, for Fuji Videotape. Its animated spokesperson is constantly being interrupted by tap dancers, high-diving hogs, and (my favorite characters) a group of frogs in leg-warmers performing some amphibious aerobics. Whether or not this off-the-wall campaign sells the product, it's worth taping.

**MIS"CEL"ANEUS:** Another comic book character will become animated this fall; look for "Swamp Thing" on Saturday mornings on CBS...Michael Jackson's "Leave Me Alone" video has earned effects animator Jim Blashfield yet another award, namely the Grammy for Outstanding Music Video, Short Form...Speaking of awards, *THE LITTLE MERMAID* won two Golden Globe awards (Best Original Score and Best Song for "Under the Sea")...Besides the 50th birthdays of cartoon characters Bugs Bunny and Pinocchio, 1990 marks the 60th birthday of another legendary toon, Betty Boop. Recently, a party was thrown in Brooklyn to commemorate this occasion. In attendance was Mae Questel, one of the original voices of Betty, and Cab Calloway, whose rotoscoped appearance in the classic "Minnie the Moocher" is still remembered by young and old alike. (What a duo; after all of these years, she can still "Boop-oop-a-doop" and he can still "Hi-De-Hi-De-Ho!") More partying for Betty's 60th in other parts of the country later this year...Speaking of Betty, one of her animators will be reaching a milestone himself. Grim Natwick will turn 100 come August 16. Besides designing the character of Betty, Natwick also worked on such classic animated films as *SNOW WHITE* and *FANTASIA* (for Disney), as well as Richard Williams' unfinished 20-year project *THE COBBLER AND THE THIEF*. Toronto's own Reg Hartt suggests that fans of the animator (and his work) send him a birthday card. Mine should be reaching him by the time you read this column. The address to write is: Grim Natwick, 1336 Centinela Ave. #1, Los Angeles, CA 90025...**JETSONS:** *THE MOVIE* will have a May release date (originally intended for a Christmas '89 release, the folks at Hanna-Barbera held back, as they didn't want to get caught in the crossfire between *THE LITTLE MERMAID* and *ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN*).

**1980S POLL:** I've decided to extend the deadline for my opinion poll of the best and worst of animation in the '80s to April 30. So, on a letter or postcard, put down your responses to these ten subjects...

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Best Feature-Length Film  | 6. Worst TV Series          |
| 2. Worst Feature-Length Film | 7. Best TV Special          |
| 3. Best (Theatrical) Short   | 8. Worst TV Special         |
| 4. Worst (Theatrical) Short  | 9. Best Cartoon Character   |
| 5. Best TV Series            | 10. Worst Cartoon Character |
- ...and send them out to me (at 71 Crystal Ave., Elmont, NY 11003-4215) before the new deadline. I'll have the final results listed in *IJ* #76. Stay tooned...

**MORE PREDICTIONS FOR 1990:** Well, so far I'm batting 1.000—all wrong! Neither of my predictions for the Best Animated Short (see *IJ* #73) were chosen. Here are the three finalists for the Oscar: "Balance," "Cow," and "The Hill Farm." Having had a chance to catch all three shorts at a recent screening at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC, my projected winner is "Balance." The Academy Awards will be handed out on March 26...Speaking of the Oscar, I'm going to go out on a limb for this, but I think that the tune "Under the Sea" from *THE LITTLE MERMAID* will win for Best Original Song. If it does, it will mark the first time in almost 50 years that a song from a feature-length cartoon earned an Oscar ("When You Wish Upon A Star" from *PINOCCHIO* was the last one. I know what some of you are thinking out there—what about "Zip-A-Dee-Do-Do-Dah" from *SONG OF THE SOUTH*? That film was half animated/half live-action; nice try...)...I have a very early prediction for the next MTV Music Video award show, regarding the category Best Special Effects. My projected nominees will be Jim Blashfield for his work on Tears for Fears' "Sowing the Seeds of Love" video, Michael Patterson for his clever contributions to Paula Abdul's "Opposites Attract" video (my personal choice for the award), and the animation crew (too numerous to go into) from Tom Petty's "Runnin' Down a Dream" video. The latter title might be a dark horse candidate; the year's still young, and another visually exciting video might dethrone it. The nominations will be announced during the summer, and the awards will be given out in early fall.

**OBIT:** Hal Ambro, an animator for the Disney studios for over 25 years, died of an undisclosed illness on February 1. He was 76. His earlier work at the Charles Mintz studio in Hollywood caught Walt Disney's attention back in 1939, when Hal was hired to work on *FANTASIA*. He'd continue to work for Disney until 1966, when he went in a different direction, working on projects for other animation studios (such as Hanna-Barbera's feature film *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* and several Chuck Jones TV specials like "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi"). In 1983, he started teaching character animation at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia (I had a chance to see many of his students' works last year; see *IJ* #73), until 1987, when he retired for medical reasons.

# THE BIRD STORY

by Larry Stoltz

Folks, it's story time. I limn this Ripley's special to you a full seven years after the events took place. Sure, I used to tell the Bird Story all the time. It's better in person. I get to use my hands. I always use my hands when I tell stories. This is the first time I've written about the Bird Story, though. Sorry, but you'll just have to picture my hands moving. I know it isn't the same.

I won my wife over with the Bird Story. We were on our second date, eating spinach-and-garlic-stuffed pizza at the Green Mill Restaurant. I went into my nuance version of the Bird Story, and I was flawless. Right before the story's climax and after a bite of spinach, my future wife blurted out, "I really like you." She was putty in my hands. Couldn't blame her, though. Who was it who once said, "There is no aphrodisiac like a good bird story"? No, not Hitchcock.

Without further ado—the Bird Story. Unembellished.

It was an early November late afternoon in the early eighties. Earlier, my brother Roger and I had attended the annual ski show in downtown Minneapolis. We were driving east on Franklin Avenue, sharing a *folle a deux*—the same delusion that we always have this time of year—that of skiing in 40 inches of powder snow. I put the car on auto pilot and stared off into the sky.

What I saw in the air was much more bizarre than any reverie I was having about powder skiing. A completely motionless bird, with head pointing towards the ground and wings tucked in, hovered about fifteen feet in the air. It wouldn't have looked any stranger if a basketball had been floating in the air, that's how odd it looked.

"Roger, look at that," I said.

"What?" he replied.

"That bird. We just went by it. It was floating in the air."

"That's what birds do, Larry. That's why they're birds."

I didn't need the aggravation. I turned the car around and went back. I had to show him that I wasn't crazy; actually, he wasn't the only one present who needed that verification.

As soon as we hit the site, the look on Roger's face was proof of my sanity. We both got out of the car and simply stared at the anomaly. The bird was not special; not a robin, not a hawk. Just a pigeonlike city bird, an air mutt. It was directly over an empty side street that intersected Franklin, which was a much busier street.

We walked out into the street, directly under the bird. Figuring the laws of gravity had not yet been repealed, we looked around for the real reason the bird was stationary in the air. String? Wires? A meat hook? We saw none of those. What then? The bird just died in the air and rigor mortis set in before he hit the ground? Right.

Suddenly, a sign from above. The bird moved a wing a tiny bit, and when it did, I saw that it was tangled in what had to be fishing line. It was not kite string; it was transparent. The line went off in two different directions; one, toward the roof of an apartment building, the other, toward—well—nowhere. It just splayed off seemingly toward the sky. It must have been hooked on a tree or apartment building, but it sure didn't look like it. It seemed like God had been flying an iron kite using fishing line, and a bird got tangled up in it.

One thing was sure—we had to get this columboid tightrope walker down or he would surely die. No one else was going to do it. I mean, who are you going to call? The Fire Department? "Hello, I know you guys get cats out of trees. Could you possibly stop by and rescue a bird? He's stuck in the air." Sure.

No, we would have to land this bird ourselves. We needed a ladder. By sheer coincidence, the closest building to the bird was a FINS AND FEATHERS MAGAZINE office. I swear it. I pounded on their front door, but, being that it was Saturday, no one was around. As I recall, the other buildings in the neighborhood were apartments, and I figured there was almost no chance of scoring a ladder.

Instead, I drove my car to a point directly under the bird. The plan was, of course, to stand on the roof of the car and make a grab for the wire. My Japanese car was made out of the same material as the cans that football players rip in half in poorly acted beer commercials. Still, the roof held me with only the slightest oil can effect.

Though my body was in the Gumby mode, my reach was about one foot short of the bird, who, by this time, was probably starting to envy penguins. My little brother tried his luck on top of the car, but, he is my little brother, after all, and he fared no better than I.

Our ritual attracted a few onlookers who seemed to be waiting for us to pass the hat around so they could pay us a buck for our street act. One young woman, who was probably a student, a liberal, a vegetarian, and a sales rep for Greenpeace, figured out that we were not street magicians. She said, "I live just across the street. Do you want me to go get a scissors or something?"

"Yes," I said, "and maybe a rope or string or Wilt Chamberlain."

I figured if I stood on the car and threw one end of the rope over the bird's highwire and caught it as it came down, I could pull the whole wire-bird assembly down. Before Ms. Greenpeace came back, I had decided that my belt would work as well as any rope or string.

I took the belt off just as Ms. Greenpeace arrived back on the scene. I threw one end of the belt over the wire and grabbed it as planned. Now, it was just a matter of pulling the bird down. The whole time, I really wasn't sure if the bird could possibly

# A BIRD

by Ken Wagner

"I wanna bird!" Jasmine demanded.

"Ya ain't gettin' one!" Fred replied gruffly.

"I said, I WANNA BIRD!"

"An I said, ya AIN'T GETTIN' ONE!"

"If I don't get a bird, I'll never speak to you again."

"FANTASTIC!"

Jasmine was telling the truth: no bird, no speak. At first, Fred enjoyed it, but then he began to miss her nagging cackle, and the months passed... Fred began to become pretty nervous; he began bursting into fits of shaking sweats, and the months passed...

Finally one day, Fred said, "I CAN'T TAKE IT NO MORE! YA GOTTA TALK TO ME! I'LL GET YA A FRIGGIN BIRD!"

"I wanna parrot."

"Yeah, yeah, parrot—anything ya want..."

So Fred went to the pet shop and tried to recall what kind of bird it was that Jasmine wanted. "Ey," he said to the attendant, "could ya kinda tell me what kinda birds ya got here?"

The male attendant was just a tad effeminate. "Well, this is a canary."

"I know that ain't what I want..."

"And these over here are parakeets."

"YEAH! THEM'S THE ONES! GIMME ONE A THEM!"

The attendant gave Fred a parakeet and he brought it home.

"Surprise, Jasmine, looky what I got ya - yer bird."

"That ain't the kinda bird I wanted, Fred."

"Sure it is..."

"No, it's not! I wanted a parrot!"

"What the hell's the difference?"

"About a thousand dollars!"

"You mean to tell me that you wanted me to buy you a \$1,000 bird?"

"Yes."

"In 'at case, honey, you go right ahead and don't talk to me."

Jasmine took a closer look and decided that the parakeet was better than nothing, and besides, she missed nagging Fred a lot more than he did.

One night they were sitting in the living room with a fire in the open fireplace. Jasmine decided to let "Reginald" out for a "fly." Reginald flew straight into the fire and that was the last they saw of him.

"Glad it didn't cost no grand," Fred said.

Jasmine would not talk to Fred for a long time after that...



live through this, and it seemed certain that he wouldn't be able to fly, at least not right away. A stop at a veterinarian's office was probably next on the agenda. Of course, anything was better than hanging in that position.

Ms. Greenpeace got on the roof with me (amazing, the structural qualities of tin nowadays). I pulled on the belt, and the wire-bird assembly came down. I was afraid of touching this trapped, wild animal (thinking it may nibble my eye out of its socket), but Ms. Greenpeace had no such reservations. After giving me the scissors, she gently reached for the bird with both hands.

I cut the wire from each side of the bird, releasing him from the tightrope. Though he was free from hanging and held gently in Ms. Greenpeace's arms, his legs and wings were incredibly entangled in the wire. In fact, the wire was so taut, I didn't think we could free him without mashing some of his vital organs. But as Roger held the feathery mummy, Ms. Greenpeace finessed the shackles off using only the scissors, saintly patience, and surgical aplomb usually associated with pediatric heart specialists.

The bird knew what this gentle woman was attempting, and he responded by remaining stationary. When the last wire was clipped, he bolted. Onward and upward he flew, bigger than a 747, more graceful than the Bolshoi, and we flew with him.

My mother always used to tell my father, "You see one mountain, you've seen them all." To this my father's reply was, "I still want to see them all. Every last one is important."

Yes, it's only one bird and one bird story, but I got a wife out of its telling, and, if you had been there, surely you too would hear "Born Free" echo from the skies each time you drive Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. As for birds and stories, every last one of them is important.



### "BETTER HANG ON TO YOUR DREAMS..."

There's nothing more important than your dreams. Don't let anybody fuck with 'em. If you let 'em crush your dreams you're gonna be in a whole lotta trouble. The streets of Berkeley are filled with Lost Souls who've lost touch with their dreams. I knew this one guy...he used to come by and ask me if I wanted to go out for coffee and "kill some time." The poor fucker spent his whole life "killing time." What a phrase! And y'know, if you're not trying to live out your dreams, well, that's all you're doing, "killing time." Most people just take their time and piss all over it. And they'll piss all over yours too, if ya let 'em.

Deep down, everybody's got a dream. Yet I'm always amazed at how easily people give up on 'em. This is important; you better not give up without a fight. You've all heard the stories—the guy who dreamed of being a musician, but his parents convinced him to give it up and pursue a more "sensible" alternative. So he spends the next 40 years committing slow death killing his time as a respectable proctologist, or some other dreary "career." Then, when he's 70 and a decrepit old thing on his deathbed, he can congratulate himself for killing his time in such a pointless, dreary fashion. Hooray, hooray. Unless, of course, your dream is to be a proctologist.

School is supposed to prepare us for our lives, so why the fuck isn't there a required course "Finding Your Dream—101?" This is the most important question you'll ever ask yourself: "What do you REALLY want to do with your time?"

And yet, again, I'm amazed at how little time people put into answering this most fundamental of questions.

It's like people are so afraid that they might fail to attain their dreams, they figure they're better off not even TRYING to attain them. Or they give up after only a half-assed stab and then reconcile themselves to a life of killing time with all the other normal, well-adjusted drones. SHEESH!

If I asked you what your secret dream of dreams is, what would you say? If I asked you how much time and effort you've put into realizing this dream, would you be satisfied with the answer?

Of course, merely having a dream is not enough. You've got to be willing to work hard and pay the price. And, most of all, you've got to be ruthlessly pragmatic and use practical common sense if you want dreams to come true. My first big dream was to be a professional basketball player. But I soon realized that, being 6-foot-tall and slow, my chances were basically nil. So it's back to the drawing board. I'm now pursuing my second dream—to make a living off my art. Of course, it's a long shot, as most dreams are (they didn't come up with the phrase "starving artist" for nothing, ya know). But I'm doing something I love, and if you're not doing that, well, you're killing your time.

If you're not ruthlessly pragmatic, you end up like Don Quixote, chasing after illusions that'll never come true. This friend of mine is a total Don Quixote—he's got a heart of gold but a head of mush. His dream is to buy land in the country and start a Rainbow Family-type hippie commune of peace and love. But he's so impractical in the way he goes about implementing this beautiful dream that it never comes true. Ye who build your hopes on a foundation of sand...

Of course, it's sometimes pretty tricky to separate a realistic dream from a hopeless illusion. Because your dreams are basically an illusion—they're an ethereal image deep within the heart of your soul. It's making your dreams real that's what this blather is all about.

I had another friend; she had all kinds of cool dreams. But what killed her was, she wasn't willing to work hard to make them come true. She'd sit around and get drunk and daydream away about all the wonderful things she was gonna do; the Great American Novel she was gonna write; the beautiful garden she was gonna plant; the award-winning film she was gonna produce. But without hard work, they're nothing but pipe dreams. Thought without action equals zero.

In fact, the phrase "pipe dreams" comes from opium smoking. I've heard heroin aficionados describe the horrible allure of the opiates. When you're on your nod, you have such wonderful, vivid pleasurable dreams—imagining what a wonderful time you'd have, say, at a picnic on the beach on a sunny day—that, hell, the daydreams and hallucinations are so wonderful, what's the point of striving to act them out in the real world? You can get lost within the caverns of Dreamland. Some mental cases go there and never return to reality.

Still, the Don Quixotes are better off than the Joe Normals, the poor slobs with NO dreams. You see them in the Financial District with their bland grey suits, killing time from 9 to 5, chasing no rainbows, merely existing until they die.

It's no wonder people in this society are so miserable. They're hopelessly out of touch with the only thing that makes life worth living. Even the dream-weavers of society—the artists and musicians—have lost their way. You ever read the average

# Let the Buyer Beware

by Susan Packie

I know you don't get somethin' for nothin' in this dog-eat-dog world, but I gave it my best shot when I went to a government auction sale and bought—ta da—a house!

Perhaps I should explain government auction sales. Government auction sales are where the material assets of criminals, whether merely accused or actually convicted, are offered to the public for just a pittance. Jewelry, furs, yachts, Mercedes-Benzes, mansions, businesses—almost anything you can think of can be purchased at a government auction sale.

My wants were modest. I was interested in an itty-bitsy, teeny-weeny, little two-bedroom with a combination living room and dining room, an itty-bitsy, teeny-weeny, little kitchen barely big enough to turn around in, and a bedroom the size of some people's closets.

Rumor had it the former owner had been in the Mafia, but I couldn't have cared less. The house was ideal for a single female. It was really just a big apartment; however, it cost less, and it would be all mine. I could play the stereo all night long without worrying about irate neighbors calling the police. I could even sunbathe in the nude right outside my back door.

As soon as I moved in, I invited all my friends and work associates to a housewarming party. I didn't recognize some of the faces, but I figured acquaintances had brought along guests. I didn't mind. I had plenty of wine and cheese, and some of these strange faces actually came with food and drink contributions for the party.

The next day, I had an upset stomach, but I attributed it to overexcitement rather than anything like food poisoning (that gift caviar had tasted a little strange) and began the pleasant task of adjusting to life in my new home. At least, I thought it would be a pleasant task. Everything seemed so absolutely perfect, I didn't see how anything could possibly go wrong.

The house was of a different mind. The problems started when I turned on the shower water that first night, and realized in the scalding aftermath that the hot and cold water taps were the reverse of what one would normally expect. The red tap spewed out cold water, and the blue tap, the hottest water I've ever felt. I checked it with my yogurt thermometer, and it registered 212 degrees—boiling!

I call this a problem in retrospect. At the time, I didn't see it that way at all. I just figured I wasn't used to home ownership and would have to become accustomed to a number of, uh, peculiarities. When the peculiarities began to mount up, I figured they might be real problems.

After burning my back the first night and giving my housewarming party in some amount of pain, I noticed that the radiators were emitting a foul odor. My first thought was to ring up the superintendent. My second thought was, I'm not in an apartment any more, I'm the superintendent here! I located the furnace in the basement and discovered that a baby skunk had crawled into it and died.

Gross to the max, right? But this was minor compared to what ensued. Everything in the house wanted to play tricks on me. The light switches wanted to blow up at my gentlest touch. The toilet wanted to overflow. The refrigerator wanted to freeze anything within ten feet of it. The ceilings wanted to drip blood and the floors wanted to act like quicksand.

But the peculiarities/problems weren't confined to the interior of the house. I started finding unusual things in my mailbox—child-like scribbles without stamps, messages composed of letters cut out of newspapers and magazines and glued on black construction paper, even a crudely-made bomb. Was I unwanted in the neighborhood? Were the gods displeased with me?

When my car's brakes suddenly failed completely, I decided it wasn't a coincidence, and it wasn't normal mechanical failure. I had just gotten new brakes and a new master cylinder the month before. This was serious business!

My guts were saying, Stick this out, but my heart replied, Don't be an ass. Move while you're still alive. Sell this place for a dollar, just get out!

Then the man with the greasy hair in the three-piece suit came to call. I noticed right off he didn't ring the short-circuited doorbell, and avoided the blood dripping from the ceiling. His only words were, "One dollar." My only word was, "Sold!" I didn't catch his name, and I may be wrong about this, but I'm almost sure he said he was a grandfather. I decided he couldn't have meant that. He looked far too young to be a grandfather.

Or did he say—godfather? I looked back and thought I saw the house blowing me a goodbye kiss.

*Congrats to Ken and Lorraine on their expectation of a third Buska soon!*

rock star interview in ROLLING STONE? Instead of painting rainbows and launching dreams, just about the only thing they talk about is their marketing strategy for achieving international superstardom. They might as well be selling shoes.

I'm not big on giving advice, but one piece of wisdom I emphatically endorse is this: GO FOR YOUR DREAMS! Shoot for the stars. And even if you don't reach them, well, you're still headed for the moon.



PRU STORY  
by  
Prudence Barber

## THE CRAMPING TRIP Part Two

"Where did he get to?" Prudence mused. "It's just like him to walk away while we're in the middle of doing something important." She looked under the bed. Not there. She looked in the closet. Again not there. She went to his favorite hidey-hole—the space behind the wastebasket by the air conditioning vent. He wasn't there either. "Where did he get to?" she repeated. She picked herself up and went downstairs. He wasn't watching TV, nor was he in the kitchen. He was gone. Prudence frowned and wiped a dark hair away from her eyes. She knew Pink Bunny had a secret place where he hid on the rare occasion that he wanted to be alone. The place was such a secret that even Prudence didn't know where it was. Perhaps he had gone there to have some quiet time before the trip.

The trip came as a total surprise. Her father called one minute and the next thing she knew she was going camping. Camping With Her Daddy. She forgot all about her lunch and rushed upstairs to break the news to Pink Bunny.

"Guess what, Bunny?" Prudence said, breathless with excitement. "What?"

"Daddy borrowed a camper from the cafeteria-guy-at-work and—" "And what?"

"And? And he is going to take us camping!"

"Oh joy!" Pink Bunny responded sarcastically.

"What do you mean by that?" Prudence's voice darkened. "I haven't seen my dad in four weeks, maybe even a whole month..."

"Relax! Relax. I meant nothing by it. Just like camping sounds like fun," said Pink Bunny, cowed.

"It didn't sound like that."

"Hey, can I help it if you hear things funny?"

Prudence let out a breath and with it the anger that was beginning to grow inside her. No matter how irksome Pink Bunny was going to be today, she wasn't going to let it get to her. It was too great a day, she was going camping with her daddy. She'd never been camping before but she heard it was fun. She never once stopped to consider that it was Beline-of-the-petting-zoo who opined this. Rather, she took in these words as if they were God-given facts.

"C'mon, we gotta pack."

"What? Now? When is this trip anyway?"

"This weekend."

"This weekend? As in tonight this weekend?"

"Yeah! You got other plans?" Now it was her turn for sarcasm. Pink Bunny never had plans. He was the laziest rabbit she ever had the opportunity to know. Well, actually, if he had plans they were to not have plans and just sit around all day or take a nap or take a series of naps to be interrupted by sitting around awhile, etc.

"Yeah, I got other plans."

"What other plans?"

"Other plans, that's all."

"What other plans, Bunny? You'll have to be more specific. What other plans?"

"I gotta floss."

Pink Bunny wasn't as enthused as Prudence hoped he would be by the prospect of camping. While it sounded fun to her, Pink Bunny gave the impression that he would rather gnaw his own legs off.

On occasion Pink Bunny would slip off to his hiding place without telling her. And no matter how hard she looked he just wasn't to be found. She gave up looking, figuring he'd be back when he was ready. Prudence often wondered if Pink Bunny's secret place was the same secret place the remote control to the TV, the housekeys and Grandma Ed's glasses snuck off to. Those things had a habit of disappearing too, sometimes for several days or longer, and would refuse to be found. And then eventually, Prudence guessed when they felt like it, they returned. There would be the remote control on the floor by the TV. The housekeys would creep onto the kitchen table, the glasses in the refrigerator or on top of the microwave. It was not that these places had been neglected in the search; more than likely they were checked a hundred times. Rather, it was like these objects took a vacation and then simply returned when ready. Prudence also wondered if these objects sat around exchanging tales, not unlike ghost stories at a slumber party, of how silly they looked while they were conducting their searches, bending over to get a better look under the couch or checking into the carton of ice cream for the keys and so forth.

Pink Bunny didn't show up for Divorce Court. And about four Prudence became concerned. The Addams Family was their favorite show and he never missed it. Her father, Patrick, was going to pick them up in an hour, so that didn't give her much time to look for him. She was going to have to miss The Addams Family if she was going to resume her search. She hoped she found him all right, because now all she wanted to do was kick him.

(To be concluded)

Zenarchy  
STORIES by Ho Chi Zen

DREAMING BUDDHAMINDS

**DISCIPLE:** If a man has ten powers, accomplishes four forms of fearlessness, and completes eighteen systems of the teaching, he is the same as Buddha who attained enlightenment under the pala tree. He can save all sentient beings and then enter into Nirvana. Is he not a real Buddha?

**BODHIDHARMA:** He is just dreaming and so are you.

(Adapted from "Fragmentary Notes of Bodhi-Dharma's Disciples" in *Buddhism and Zen* by Nyogen Senzaki and Ruth Strout McCandless)

POETRY COLLECTIVES

"If genealogical development is one outstanding feature if Japanese poetry, group orientation in its composition is another. Tanka were often composed in or for a group of people—most notably in uta-awase, tanka matches, where tanka by different poets were judged in pairs. The group orientation of this form is also manifest in any of the twenty-one imperial anthologies of Japanese poetry. In these, tanka are classified into categories such as spring, summer, autumn, winter, love, and miscellaneous, and the pieces selected for each category are so arranged as to indicate temporal progression. Here the appropriateness of a given piece for a given place is of primary importance. Individual poems, and therefore individual poets, are subordinated to the design of a larger audience.

"Group orientation found its ultimate expression in the renga, which in principle required the participation of two or more persons. As a sophisticated game for literate people, the renga engendered some distinctive features, such as the set roles of host, guest of honor (or 'master'), and scribe, and the rules of composition partly governed by their relations. Also characteristics were the stress on enjoyment, readiness to collaborate, effort to maintain a common literary milieu, and attention given to etiquette. Its deliberate avoidance of linear narrative development, or the technique of 'disjunctive linking,' as Earl Miner put it, shows renga's origin as a contest of wit in a group, with each poet called upon to cap a statement in verse, rather than one poet creating a whole story. As might be expected, hokku also tended to be written in group settings. In Japan today this predilection for making poetry writing a group activity remains particularly strong among writers of traditional haiku and tanka."

—Hiroaki Sato, *One Hundred Frogs* (Weatherhill, 1983)

JUDO AGAINST EVIL

Rabbi Abraham said: "I have learned a new form of service from the wars of Frederick, king of Prussia. It is not necessary to approach the enemy in order to attack him. In fleeing from him, it is possible to circumvent him as he advances, and fall on him from the rear until he is forced to surrender. What is needed is not to strike straight at Evil but to withdraw to the sources of divine power, and from there to circle around Evil, bend it, and transform it into its opposite."

(From Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, Schocken, 1947, pt. 115)

HANDY DANDER

"Since I have tamed my angor, I keep it in my pocket. When I need it, I take it out." —Rabbi Pinhas

SHOW BIZ

Ho Chi Zen: Why can't you be like everybody else?

Rabbi Koan: Everybody else is a hard act to follow!

## COUGHS UP

by Larry Oberc

Hard off to his side, shielding his face with a shakay crusted sleeve, trying his best to be polite, asks me again, once he's caught his breath, if I got any extra change, at ten to eleven last night he got vicious, called me an asshole as he leaned against the door to the liquor store, as he tried his last few long shot deals to get a bottle to warm the night, today he forgets all that, like I'm a stranger everytime he sees me, whether its the morning, or ten minutes before the liquor store locks its door at night, last week I passed him one morning, he was doing good, case of beer in his hand, he must have found some money, a ten dollar bill or so dropped by a stranger's hand, I was hungover, he told me I could get drunk with him, that he had plenty to drink, that all in passing, like he meant it, like he knew I needed something to rid the edge, he coughs again, this time a mixture of green and red, his hand, his sleeve, not moving fast enough to block it, I hand him a dollar, he nods, and shuffles down the street, the ground stained with blood and bile and memories....



## "AND NOW, A FEW MINUTES WITH WHAT'S-HIS-FACE"

by Brian Ruddy

Andy "The Greek" Campanis was a television star. His plump, droopy face and high, screechy voice were instantly recognizable to millions and millions of viewers. Andy's "TVQ"—that is, his recognizability rating—was astronomically high, exceeded only by that exalted trinity of video luminaries, Cosby, Carson and Hitler.

Andy held two jobs on the same network. On a football pre-game show he made predictions about the day's gridiron contests. To viewers, it didn't matter that Andy was a rather poor prognosticator, that he probably couldn't have picked the winner between the Titanic and the iceberg. None of that mattered. People liked him anyway because of his colorful style. He added something special to the show and to the game itself.

On Sunday nights Andy appeared for a few minutes at the end of a popular newsmagazine show. His function on the show consisted of making wry, pithy observations on what might be called, for lack of a better phrase, American culture. At this he was extremely talented. People loved his unique blend of humor and social commentary. His insightful sense of humor was a true gift, a gift which he had recently exploited to its fullest extent in a series of best-selling books.

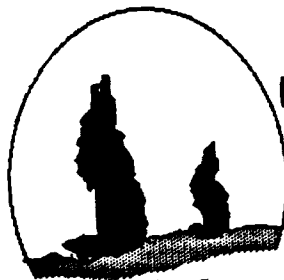
On the side, Andy was an influential executive on the front office staff of a major league baseball team. In his remarkable, multifaceted professional life, Andy had achieved what most of us dare not dream. Success, fame and fortune were his. In short, Andy had it all.

Then one day Andy was sitting in a midtown Italian restaurant drinking Chianti, wolfing down delicious tidbits from a platter of antipasto and snapping out wry, pithy answers to questions from a newspaper reporter. Many of Andy's buddies were sitting 'round the table eating, drinking, laughing and generally having a good ol' time. At such gatherings, Andy was both king and court jester. On this particular day he was in top form. None of his pals could remember him ever being wryer or pithier. Even the newspaper reporter, who considered himself a very serious journalist, couldn't help getting caught up in the circuslike atmosphere of masculine merriment.

Then something went terribly wrong. Perhaps it was the wine; perhaps it was the sheer intoxication of popularity; but whatever it was, it made Andy's mind—and his tongue—run right off the rails. To wit: in response to the reporter's question regarding the merits of print versus video journalism, Andy suddenly began talking about "niggers," "fags," and "nigger fags and homo kikes." In a shrill but professorial tone, he then launched into a sort of bizarre biology lecture. He stated that blacks were not human beings, but rather a species of fungus closely related to the common field mushroom. He further announced that Mexicans were almost certainly members of the reptile family, but that additional research would be needed to determine their precise zoological classification. Digressing from the main thrust of this lunacy, Andy asserted that "thermal radiation and noxious gases produced by homosexual promiscuity" were responsible for creating the hole in the ozone layer. This was part of a conspiracy of "pan-homo hegemonists," he alleged, a conspiracy which he would shortly foil by "naming names" at a press conference to be held atop the Great Pyramid of Cheops. His outrageous oration apparently over, Andy took a long swig of wine and proceeded to stuff his mouth with antipasto.

The entire restaurant was silent save for the sound of Andy's gluttonous mastication. He looked around and saw jaws hanging open, eyeballs bulging in disbelief at the spectacle of professional self-destruction they had just witnessed. And then, as the inevitable consequences of what he had uttered began to register in the narrow mind of Andy "The Greek" Campanis, he produced a gasp. The sudden intake of breath caused a large chunk of Gorgonzola to become lodged in his trachea.

Andy started to choke. Still frozen in shock over his verbal suicide, no one in the restaurant was physically able to render assistance. Even the reporter, whose tape recorder had captured every word of Andy's



## HOWLING AT THE MOON BY MIKE DOBBS

I'm sure Andy Rooney wouldn't mind having lunch with me these days. In fact, I'm sure he wouldn't mind having lunch with just about anyone. He's suddenly got a lot of time on his hands, and everyone who cares about the trivial ramblings of television commentators would like to ask him the following question:

"Andy, are you stupid?"

Here's a guy who has won Emmys for his work on television; a personality who actually can construct best-selling books out of his collection of scripts of essays which may last three or four minutes; a man who is actually respected in an industry where sincere admiration is as rare as true talent...this is the guy who makes a statement in an interview that Black Americans have been breeding themselves into a status of lower intelligence.

I haven't really liked Andy Rooney for years. I think his tiny little essays are wetdreams for old cranks. Rooney's pieces seldom answer any of the questions they raise. I'm sure he intends for his audience to forget out the answers themselves, but we know what really happens...people gather around the tube to watch what old Andy can complain about this week. Oh maybe, it will be how people use language or labels on orange juice containers or if people are impolite in restaurants.

My favorite was an essay on things viewers send him. With simmering contempt, lovable old Andy showed off his collection of gadgets and ideas sent in by his well-meaning fans with almost each object the butt for a little zinger.

I just thought Andy was just another cynical old newsman...a guy who let the insincerity, the bullsh\*t and the politics get at him. Other old newshounds would have simply retired and bugged their family and local bartender. Rooney turned it into a profitable act. I never thought he was stupid, though.

I know he must have said what he allegedly stated because of the following facts:

1. Rooney made a denial of the statement, but did not seek a libel charge against THE ADVOCATE.
2. Rooney at no time demanded THE ADVOCATE prove he made the comment by producing a tape of the interview.
3. CBS didn't bother to support Rooney for a microsecond, because they know he's guilty. If THE ADVOCATE had been out gunning for Rooney and had fabricated this whole thing, CBS would never have turned its back on such a juicy story.

What an irony for a guy who won awards for writing **BLACK HISTORY: LOST, STOLEN AND STRAYED**, a highly influential documentary. Not only is this guy a closet racist, but he doesn't have an inkling how the media industry works after all of his years in it.

He won't be back, by the way. Three months off the tube is like three centuries. I'm sure CBS is thinking about who will be his replacement. There's Paul Harvey or Morton Downey, Jr. My choice would be Ed Anger, the columnist of MY AMERICA in the tabloid rag WEEKLY WORLD NEWS.

I just hope Andy has saved his money.

(Ed. PS: Well, as we all know, he's back now...)

tirade of intolerance, was too dumbfounded to think of the Heimlich Maneuver, much less perform it. Presently Andy turned blue, then white, and then his eyes rolled back in his head and he fell face first into the platter of meats and cheeses.

Andy was dead.

If any lesson can be learned from this tragedy, it is simply this: Bigotry kills. But sometimes it kills the right people.

TO THE QUESTION —  
"What would you most like to do in this life?" — no one ever answers: "Believe it." That would have been my reaction until a W. H. H. mind-changing head injury experience occurred that must be related. I'm sure that anyone with a firmly adopted concept and no one else has come up with even one. I'm not boasting.

It's just that anyone else would have to travel the same road and no one has. Head injuries are not fairly common but what a first with mine was no doubt a first. This richest of all human experiences can never happen again to anyone except the one who has now returned. Let's give credit to

man of the cloth for holding the faith bulge of a nation's man of faith — J.C. Brinkman. A man of have in ages past (let's hope) send \$ A.S.E. to: **BRAINEAU'S BIBLE** Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO 44504



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# A Dip in the Plasma Pool

\* SPECIAL EDITION \*

by Dorian Tenore-Bartilucci

...We interrupt the five-part article on the films of Jeff Goldblum (did I hear whoops of joy?) to bring you this special bulletin on a perfectly terrific movie that's undeservedly faltering at the all-important box office. Stay close to your IJ and read on for further details....

## BETTER HEAD THAN FED, or, Don't Need To Be a Sutherland To Know Which Way The Wind Blows

I tell you, it's a sad world indeed when a formula he-man action flick starring agent-cum-racketeer Mike Ovitz's martial arts instructor (HARD TO KILL is right; I thought we'd seen the last of Steven Seagal in 1988's ABOVE THE LAW) makes tons more money than a quirky, refreshing character piece like FLASHBACK. Some children of the '60s have squawked because FLASHBACK doesn't spend most of its running time on didactic preaching about the ideals of those halcyon days of free love and psychedelia. God help us, they wail, the Abbie Hoffman-esque character played by Dennis Hopper starts the plot rolling for very capitalistic reasons: he wants publicity in order to pique a publisher's interest in his biography!

Look, if you want a history lesson, go to school. If you want a night at the movies full of offbeat comedy and adventure, do see FLASHBACK while there's still time (why wait till it hits your local video store?). Okay, perhaps when you think of comedy, Dennis Hopper and Kiefer Sutherland aren't the first names that leap to mind. Surprise! These guys work perfectly together, and their roles fit them like the proverbial gloves. In fact, I don't see how anybody but Hopper could have played hyper, wisecracking Huey Walker, the "clown prince of radicals." (The first choices for this part were Bill Murray and Chevy Chase -- what hallucinogen was the casting director on?) Walker's big claim to fame was unhitching then-Vice President Spiro Agnew's railroad car from a departing train during a 1969 whistle stop tour. No one got hurt, but as G-Man Paul Dooley explains, "The FBI doesn't like to look foolish." Walker eluded his Federal captors and became a fugitive for the next 20 years. Straight-arrow, too-old-for-his-age rookie FBI agent John Buckner (Sutherland) is assigned to escort the recaptured, still-crazy-after-all-these-years Walker to his trial in Spokane. Since the airport is conveniently fogged in, the boys must travel by -- you guessed it -- train.

Think you can map out FLASHBACK's formula from there? Think again! The fast-moving, picaresque script by David Loughery (who'd have thought the scenarist of DREAMSCAPE and STAR TREK V could whip up work like this?) is chock-full of surprises and action; it's rich in humor, suspense, and character evolution. If you insist on comparing it to something, think of MIDNIGHT RUN rewritten by Bob Crumb. Almost nobody in the film is quite what they seem, and just when you're sure FLASHBACK is going to go off in one tried-and-true direction -- fish-out-of-water comedy, buddy movie, cop flick -- it takes a sharp left into a plot twist you never dreamed of! In the words of DEATHTRAP's anti-hero Sidney Bruhl, "It's so good that not even a gifted director could hurt it." Italian director Franco Amurri (formerly an assistant to Fellini, presently the father of Susan Sarandon's child, Eva) keeps things merrily percolating like the refreshments in a Haight-Ashbury coffee-house. (One can't help wondering, though, what a director like Joel Coen or THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST's Ted Flicker would've done with this film.)

The wonderful cast is obviously having fun. Michael McKean and Richard Masur are a riot as two BIG CHILL-olds who, disillusioned by the removal of "Born to be Wild" from their local pub's jukebox ("You know what's on there now? 'Inks!' I-N-X-S-I" wails Masur, who also boasts proudly of the fact that he owns a tape of EASY RIDER), try to recapture their '60s idealism by pulling off the klutziest kidnapping this side of RUTHLESS PEOPLE. As a corrupt, politically ambitious sheriff, Cliff DeYoung (GLORY, SHOCK TREATMENT) is an effective, anxiety-ridden villain. Carol Kane, as a flower-child holdout who's dismayed to find herself coveting microwave ovens, is her usual charmingly ditsy self. Admittedly, the scene in which Sutherland and Hopper meet up with Kane at an all-but-abandoned commune drags a bit. However, since this scene is key to understanding what makes the young Fed tick (with some beautifully understated acting by Sutherland), this is a minor quibble.

The nice thing about FLASHBACK is that you don't necessarily have to have lived through the 1960s to enjoy it (of course, it wouldn't hurt). It really can be enjoyed on a variety of levels: as an exciting comedy-adventure, an off-the-wall road picture, or a sly satire on '60s-through-'90s mores (the music serves as a good counterpoint to this, especially the Big Audio Dynamite songs used over the opening and closing credit sequences). Throughout the shenanigans, the filmmakers never lose sight of the underlying theme: that a rebel is anyone who resists being molded to someone else's standards, whether said standards are liberal, conservative, or what-have-you. The bottom line: FLASHBACK is a trip! Catch it before it goes into hiding!

## PARTIAL FILM ROUNDUP OF 1989

or, A Few Films Not Nominated for  
the Best Picture Academy Award  
by Todd Kristel

HEATHERS...I don't know what inner demons drove Daniel Waters to rewrite (more or less) MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH as a comedy (!), but he deserved an Academy Award nomination for the screenplay to this fantastic satirical film. The movie reminds me somewhat of the excellent RIVER'S EDGE, which, like HEATHERS, got many good reviews but, also like HEATHERS, was slagged off by the Academy Award voters, perhaps because of prejudice against both black comedy in general ("inferior" to "aerious" drama) and "teen" films in particular. Meanwhile, Woody Allen's script for CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS received a nomination. Not only is Allen's film less funny than HEATHERS (and certainly not any less nasty), but it's also less intelligent (and certainly more pretentious). Speaking of awards, I think Winona Ryder's performance in HEATHERS is superior to Michelle Pfeiffer's Oscar-nominated performance in THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS. I bet it's better than Jessica Lange's recent Oscar-nominated performance as well, but I haven't actually seen Lange's film (although I suspect that the same could be said for many of the people who voted for her).

DO THE RIGHT THING...Excellent visual composition, cinematography, acting, theme song...Streets look too damn clean (even if the set was constructed "on location")... Film relies on stereotyped characters (like the three main male characters in Spike Lee's SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT) and talk show clichés about racism, but it's still both intelligent and engrossing...The great act of "protest" against white oppression (i.e., the riot in which the pizza shop is destroyed) looks almost like a Ku Klux Klan lynching. Some African-Americans are dissatisfied with the film because Lee doesn't show blacks engaging in constructive social protest. By the way, the film got panned by most of the NYC "black" papers...I admire the way Lee not only gets the audience to think about racism (instead of just spoonfeeding them "socially conscious" platitudes, like DRIVING MISS DAISY) but also gets some filmgoers to think about the assumptions underlying the film itself...

ENEMIES, A LOVE STORY...The acting in excellent, but I can't shake the feeling that this film's good reviews are at least partially due to a case of "they mention the Holocaust so it must be a SERIOUS film and therefore great ART" syndrome. The film doesn't live up to its reputation, so I'm not complaining about its absence among the Iscar nominees for Best Picture, particularly since the acting wasn't overlooked (Anjelica Huston is a good bet to win Best Supporting Actress).

THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHHAUSEN...Visually stunning, wildly entertaining (albeit somewhat uneven), and the second biggest domestic box office flop of the 1980s (not adjusting for inflation, it was a bigger flop than HEAVEN'S GATE or ISHTAR), this film is at a "strategic disadvantage" for even the "techie" awards (not that the Academy has given Terry Gilliam his full due in the past).

DRUGSTORE COWBOY...Well, I was greatly impressed by this film. But, despite winning a major critic's award for best film of 1989, I can't imagine a movie with William S. Burroughs (who qualifies the anti-drug message of the film by noting that anti-drug hysteria can serve as a political excuse to institute repressive social measures) receiving an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture. Apparently, the voters couldn't imagine it either.

CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS...As you might have guessed by now, I was disappointed by this exercise in introductory existentialism. It seems like Woody Allen was reaching for Camus' THE STRANGER but couldn't quite figure out how to get there. The screenplay is too heavy-handed (Allen keeps reminding us what philosophical points he is trying to make), and his world view is... well...parochial. Doesn't Allen know anybody who isn't upper-class, white, male, Jewish, middle-aged, well-educated, alienated, neurotic, and living in New York City?

(continued next page)

(Okay, there are women in this movie, but here—unlike some of Allen's other films—they function mostly as "props" to further the story. Allen's character in this film isn't upper class, but most of the other prominent male characters are affluent, and Allen himself plays a neurotic Jewish filmmaker, so I hesitate to credit him with stretching out into new territory.) Maybe it's no coincidence that my two favorite Allen films of the past decade—ZELIG and THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO—aren't trapped in this demographically select world. (Anyway, I think those two films are not only more entertaining than CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS, but also more artistically and philosophically rewarding.)

## THE PEOPLE IN WHITE

by Larry Oberc

Tell me it's my imagination, that those movements on my skin are in my head, not on my arms, my legs, my stomach, it feels like early summer ocean water crawling up my body, ice cold misery, lying to myself, trying to convince myself I feel comfortable, not all wrong, all shakes, all wired out inside, I flick at the shadows, the small dark objects that crawl too fast to knock off, they leave trails of footprints, trails of their reality like a finger tracing pictures in sand, on my stomach, my arms are tied down, strapped to the bed, unable to scratch the itch that binds me, the lights go on, the doctor looks at my charts, terrorizes me with freedom, tells me I am getting better, I can go home in a couple of days, I won't have to feel the bugs no more, I watch him turn out the lights, leave the room, and wonder if he's lying....

*Congrats to Kathy on her new job!*

## NATURAL REMEDY MIRACLES

by Wayne Hogan

We've become a very health-conscious society. But then, I suspect that a lot of folks probably already know that.

We've also become great preferers of "natural" this and "natural" that, as opposed, say, to "unnatural" this and "unnatural" that. Preferers of the "generic" over the "specific." Preferers of "natural remedies" for virtually any malady that can befall us, rather than the schooled medicine practiced by green-smocked interns in smoke-filled hospitals.

Natural remedies. That's the focus here. To spread the word about how people are being miraculously helped every day of the week by "natural remedies." To tell this story, I'll let the unsolicited case histories of a few individuals speak for themselves.

### CASE HISTORY #1:

I was 97 years old and had to use a cane to walk. Then one day about a year ago I was hit by a Volkswagen as I walked home from church. Broke just about every bone in my body. The doctors said I would never walk again, not even with a cane. But I've been on a natural remedy for six months now and feel fine. The pain has vanished and I can even run up stairs.

### CASE HISTORY #2:

The only thing I can figure is that I inherited bad hair. Anyway, it started to fall out when I was quite young. After many years of using expensive prescriptions written for me by MDs, I started taking the natural remedy my sister-in-law told me about. Now, not only has my hair stopped falling out, it's actually growing back. And getting darker, too. I'm planning to go to Kroger's one day next week and see if I can find some matching rouge.

### CASE HISTORY #3:

It's embarrassing for me to say this, but I've been constipated for as far back as I can remember. After being operated on several times for my condition, I happened to visit my dentist one day for my usual checkup and he told me about a natural remedy. I've been using it religiously ever since and have had no further discomfort.

### CASE HISTORY #4:

Acne is a big problem for me, and I'm 62 years old. My face gets covered with little bumps. The nights are the worst—the little bumps break and run all over my pillow from the tossing and turning I do in my sleep. My wife won't hardly speak to me any more. Just last week, though, I happened to see a bottle of natural remedy on an over-the-counter shelf down at the Red Food supermarket. Since nothing else that the miracle of modern medical science had told me to take has ever done me a bit of good, I thought it couldn't hurt to try some. Now, just seven short days later, I'm practically free from acne. It's been a genuine miracle.

GRATUITOUS SCREAM:

AAAAIEEE!

J.P.M.



—WHERE RANDOM NUMBERS COME FROM—

1-800-RANDOM. MASTERMATH SPEAKING.  
YOUR RANDOM NUMBER IS, LET'S SEE, OH, 2.

### CASE HISTORY #5:

I've been married 33 years and have a wonderful husband and two kids we both think the world of. The only problem I've had for all these years is the headache I get every time I start to wash the dishes. It gets so bad I have to go lay down and let my husband finish them for me. I'd tried everything as a curative—paper plates, a dishwasher, eating out—but nothing worked. Then one night my parents came over for supper, and when I told my mother she might have to wash the dishes, she handed me a bottle of natural remedy and said I should try it. I did, and not only was I able to do my own dishes that night, but have been doing them ever since, with not one sign of a headache. I can hardly believe it!

### CASE HISTORY #6:

Lots of soldiers who fought in the South Pacific Islands during WWII caught malaria. I know I did, and it's bothered me ever since. About three weeks ago, though, I was telling the kid who mows our lawn about it, and he told me he'd heard of a natural remedy that might be just what I needed. I tried it and haven't had a sleepless or sweaty night since.

### CASE HISTORY #7:

My skin started cracking when I was seven years old. I'm 77 now, so you can just imagine what I look like. About a month ago I started taking one large natural remedy capsule per day. Not one new fissure has appeared since then. Perfect strangers are constantly stopping me on the street to tell me how good my skin looks.

### CASE HISTORY #8:

I'm in local politics and the stress in my line of work is just about unbelievable. But I've been taking the natural remedy my Ward Heeler recommended and it's been working just fine. Last election I was voted out of office for the first time in my life but it didn't even faze me. I can't say enough for natural remedies.

### CASE HISTORY #9:

Thanks to a natural remedy, I've whipped the bad case of warts I've been carrying around for the past 27 years.

### CASE HISTORY #10:

I've always had this problem of getting in the shortest but invariably slowest checkout line at the drug store or supermarket or wherever it is that a checkout line forms. I'd always imagined that I was the only one this happened to. Then one day I was having a casual conversation with one of my wife's co-agents at a well-known local real estate office and it happened to come out that she, too, used to get in those same short, slow lines, but that since she'd started taking a natural remedy this no longer happened. I rushed to the nearest supermarket where, less than seven short hours later, I emerged with a bottle of natural remedy. I've never taken more than a spoonful a day and not once since I started taking it have I been in a short but abysmally slow checkout line. I'd highly recommend natural remedy to anybody.

Well, there you have it. Ten unsolicited testimonials for natural remedy. Pretty convincing, aren't they? I know I'll be trying one real soon, now. Chances are you will, too.

# THE ECONOMIST

*A Folk Tale Foretold*

*by Ronald N. Johnson*

Once upon a time in America there was a poor boy by the name of Willie, who was penniless and could neither read nor write. Willie lived during the reign of King George II. Though this was a time of great prosperity, poor old George had a problem: no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't balance the budget. This caused a great clamor throughout the land. What, George wondered, would his predecessor, Ronnie I, do in such a case? So he went on TV and announced that the economist who could tell him how to balance the budget would be rich for the rest of his life.

Sitting in the living room of his Appalachian shanty and watching, Willie at first cursed the fact that he didn't have cable so he could turn to another program. But after awhile he began to wonder if it would be so hard to play the economist. I think I'll try, he decided. So he bought a chalk-striped suit and went to the President.

George, though he talked in circles, sometimes making no sense at all, was quick-witted enough to see the PR value of having a token poor man in his administration. He hired Willie and shut him up in a room in the White House to study. Soon Willie became one of the President's favorite advisors; he never bothered George with memos and position papers. Besides, Willie was a great horse shoe player—with Willie on his team, George never lost.

In Willie's office there was nothing but a desk with a big economics book on it, and paper and a pen. All day Willie sat at his desk and looked at the book. Sometimes he made marks on the paper and, as he couldn't write, he produced some very strange marks. Every hour on the hour a blonde, who wore tight miniskirts and low-cut blouses, brought him coffee. Whenever she bent over to serve him, Willie would think that being a public servant was a wonderful thing indeed.

Though Willie didn't know it, every night when he left his office some members of the Cabinet looked at these marks. Somehow, possibly because no economist can be understood, they got the idea that Willie was a very wise economist. These Cabinet members, the Secretary of Warmongering and the Secretary of Tax Writeoffs for the Extremely Wealthy, were the ones responsible for the deficit. With their guilty consciences, they imagined, from the knowing looks Willie gave them in the halls of the White House, that he suspected them. They couldn't bow and scrape enough. "Yes, honorable economist! Your least wish is an order, economist!"

After talking to them, Willie always checked to make sure his wallet was still in his pocket. A poor boy, and therefore very cunning, he figured these Secretaries were up to something and set a trap for them. One evening, after the hour Willie normally left his office for the day, the Secretary of Warmongering came in and found no one in the room. But when he picked up Willie's papers, an alarm went off and bulbs flashed from hidden cameras. The Secretary withdrew in fright.

Later the Secretary of Tax Writeoffs came in, and once more the alarm sounded. He too ran away in fright.

The Secretaries had a discussion. "We have been found out, and if this economist tells the President, we're done for."

They went to Willie. "If you tell the President that we're responsible for the deficit," they said, "we will be fired. Take this passbook for a secret Swiss bank account, and keep your mouth shut."

Willie took the passbook and said, "Don't worry. I won't tell. But from now on you must do everything I say." He glanced at the figures. "To begin with, I think you left out some zeros on this figure, don't you?"

The next day Willie went to the Oval Office to see George. Surrounded by his dog and several grandchildren, King George was sitting behind his desk, posing for a photo opportunity. Photographers, their flash bulbs exploding, were milling about the room, taking pictures from all angles.

"Look," George said to his grandson, "a thousand points of light."

When they were alone, Willie told the President that he knew what was behind the budget problem. He convinced George that the deficit wasn't caused by simply spending more than they were taking in, but that Russian agents in the counting houses were stealing the nation blind.

This pleased the old Cold Warrior more than if he had found out, as he suspected, that the deficit was the fault of welfare chiselers. At one time, George had been in charge of dirty tricks and the Russians had always thought up better ones. "I knew Gorbys couldn't be trusted!" he said. George then ordered everybody in the Treasury Department with a Russian surname imprisoned.

George called a press conference. When one of the reporters dared to argue with him, he said, looking right into the camera, "Read my lips. We have found that there are thieves within seeing distance of the White House itself."

He added that in the future the budget would be balanced. Willie made the cover of TIME and was hailed as a national hero.

Of course, later the press found out it was all a hoax, but everybody lived happily ever after anyway. The Secretaries became heads of charitable foundations, and the Russians plugged their books on "Donahue" and "Oprah." George denied knowledge of the whole affair—he had learned Ronnie's lessons about Irangate. His memoirs, *Your Maine Man*, were a smash best-seller, and his version of his encounter with Willie made for fascinating reading.

Willie was last spotted in Paraguay with the blonde, who wasn't exactly the royalty of fairy tales but did have a Princess Di hairdo. It was said that she made a great cup of coffee.

# THE DOG-EARED MAN

*by Andy Plumb*

The dog-eared man fell sloppily into his chair. He felt perpendicular, though he wasn't. He looked askance, noticing his nose was out of place. "Another day without rhyme or reason," he chuckled to himself, as he was wont to do on days without rhyme or reason...

The dog-eared man's wife pattered around the house in ruby slippers. At the third hole, she let out a banshee-like scream, "Honey, the cat's out of the bag again!" The dog-eared man teased her hair and handed her a bagel...

The dog-eared man's children, Meta and Zoic, twins, born miraculously on the same day, played jacks atop the refrigerator. "Two aces beats a full house!" Meta yelled at Zoic. Zoic held her breath till her feet turned blue, did a doubleback camel into a bowl of whip and chill and ran off to join the Navy...

"Well, that makes life a wee bit easier," the dog-eared man said. "Zoic never chewed his food properly and he was without opposable thumbs."

The dog-eared man yearned for a slice of life, preferably with pepperoni and mushrooms. He wanted desperately to make love with a primal nun, to express his innermost secrets and desires in Sanskrit, to discover meaning in buried dogma.

The dog-eared man's wife gazed horizontally into the mirror. She removed the lacquer from her eyelids. "I must have been stillborn," she casually uttered, "must have been hatched in a crow's nest," "must have been purchased at a hardware store." She threw up her hands in disgust (which were quickly snatched by a low-flying bat), and tried to drown herself in the frozen food section of the local supermarket...

The dog-eared man's daughter Meta, pretending she was a slinky, took a tumble down the stairs. She stood on one leg like a whooping crane. She drew blood from her Barbie doll. She was happy in spite of herself...

The dog-eared man took a leap of faith one day—from a stack of 101 Bibles. He came across a litany of self-deceptions. He studied his hands, following each line to its logical conclusion, never giving up hope. He didn't find what he was looking for, but he did get to go backstage and meet the members of U2...

The dog-eared man had a recurring dream of a world without fungi...

# JOCK N. BINSTOCK

*by Roger Coleman*

"Mr. Epidophilus? I'm Jock, the agent for the Sioux Falls expansion basketball team, the 'Frigid Fingers'."

"What do YOU want?" the Giant thundered.

"Don't need to raise your voice," Jock slicked in his best used-car-salesman manner. "Have I got a deal for you! You'd make a perfect full-post center on our team...it could make you rich and famous."

"I'm already famous," the Giant quenched his thunder down a few decibels to a rumble, "and don't need no more 'milky white' cows or magic beans."

"We'll offer you a million dollars to sign and one mil per year for five years, and guarantee a long bed at every hotel," Jock countered.

"Sounds good, but I want first class travel always, and no steroids," the behemoth bargained.

"We have one problem." Jock unfolded a contract. "Your name's too long for a marquee."

"Fee, fi, fo, fum, time to kick butt and other balderdash." He raised his rumble an octave. "My names no worse than Kareem Kaboom. So it's Epidophilus the Giant, take it or leave it."

"Okay, okay, we'll go with that," Jock agreed.

"And I won't wear no rhinestone pants or glitter make-up," the Giant rumbled on.

"Way to go, big guy," Jock smiled as he got his pen. "This is basketball, not wrestling, you know."

# THE TOWER OF...

by Victor Fleischer

The understandings we now have of gravity were developed in a little town in Italy about 500 years ago by a famous experimenter and man of science, Galileo Gallileo. Galileo utilized as his laboratory a tower structure which now bears the name of its location.

During the time of Galileo, the pizza trade was a rich and flourishing source of income for this town. So famous was this pizza that the town itself became totally identified with it, and became known as the Town of the Pizza, or, in the more familiar form, the Town of Pizza.

Galileo's early experiments in gravity were performed from the tower using pizza pies of various sizes and densities which were supplied by the town's bakers and by Mrs. Gallileo. In fact, it was Mrs. Gallileo's pizza which was primarily used in this experiments.

Various types of pizzas were dropped in the experiments. No combination was left untried. Mushroom pizza was dropped with anchovy pizza; plain pizza was dropped with cheese pizza; pepper pizza was dropped with sausage pizza. The number of combinations was virtually endless. But alas, although this was a boom for the pizza business, it was a bust for Galileo.

Gravity eluded Galileo.

Searching for answers, the blame was placed on Mrs. Gallileo and her pizzas. Galileo's marriage was put through many months of severe stress. The marriage survived, however, primarily because Galileo liked his wife's pizza and divorce was not permitted in Italy at the time.

The failure of the experiments caused great depression amongst the people of the Town of Pizza. They were a proud people, accustomed to success, especially in pizza, and this failure caused a pall to settle over the Town of Pizza. The pizza business went into a decline.

The town fathers decided that a change in the name of the town would be beneficial. This would break the association with the failure of the pizza-drop experiments. A name was sought which would be different and yet still be associative with the original name.

Almost a year went by and finally it was decided to change the name from the Town of Pizza to the Town of Pisa. There was a faction who claimed that this new name was a coverup for a political maneuver to gain favor with the pizzerias; but these dissidents controlled only a small piece of the pie and the new name was adopted. The Town of Pisa regained its lost ebullience and well-being.

While all this was going on, Galileo was not idle. Adamant in his convictions about gravity, he continued his work at the tower. He experimented with various objects and materials. At one point books were used. They were tied together to prevent them from flapping, which would have disturbed their trajectories. Bags filled with water were also used. These, however, proved to be impractical. It was hard work carrying the water to the top of the tower, and the bags burst on impact with the ground, leaving it muddy and impassable after a day of heavy testing.

One evening while returning home from a particularly fruitless day on the tower, Galileo's attention was caught by a display in the window of an Army-Navy store. Usually this window display contained surplus crossbows and arrows with reconditioned tips or used oars and resewn sails. But what Galileo now saw aroused his interest. The window displayed cannon balls. And they were on sale.

Galileo went inside and looked around. It had occurred to him almost a year earlier that cannon balls would make good droppings for his experiments, but they had always been too expensive. "But these balls are on sale; they're a good buy," he thought to himself, his perceptive eyes noting that the cannon balls had barely been used. Maybe one or two firings, at the most.

Galileo's mathematical mind worked quickly. The various sizes of cannon balls would permit almost all combinations of weights and sizes to be dropped, more than enough to confirm gravity.

"I'll find the money for these balls somewhere. I know I can get the lira. After all, my wife is working part-time. Besides, I have a friend at the banca. They know me and my family. I could even charge some of the balls on my Italiano Espresso card." With all this in mind, Galileo quickly struck a bargain with the owner of the Army-Navy store.

Events now moved rapidly. Each day for the next several weeks, experiments at the tower were performed with a heightened sense of excitement and anticipation. Each dropping brought further insight.

It was during this period that the tower acquired its uniquely identifying lean. The cannon balls were very heavy. Each day the entire load of cannon balls would be hoisted to the same spot on the top of the tower, many times over. This heavy weight at the same point at the top of the tower for this extended period of time caused the lean.

Finally Galileo was ready to make known publicly the results of his many months of experimentation. Notices were posted in all the ristoranti and capuccino houses. Announcements were sent out with each take-out order in all the pizzerias. Galileo would conduct a public demonstration at the tower.

On the appointed day a crowd gathered about the tower. This crowd contained an even larger proportion of pizza lovers than the crowd that had gathered for the first experiments. The expectation was high that pizzas would again be dropped from the tower.

The experiments went well. The cannon balls dropped as expected. The pizza lovers in the crowd were at first puzzled by the cannon balls. This is not what they had expected. As the droppings continued, they grew more and more restive. When it became evident that no pizzas were to be dropped, the pizza lovers, who by now were very hungry, became very very angry. They began moving away from the tower, seeking gratification.

The pizzerias and ristoranti near the tower filled quickly. The crowd overflowed onto the surrounding piazzas and plazas and onto the Renaissance fountains with their spraying water, pools and statuary. Waiters rushed frantically about, taking orders. Their aprons flapped audibly against their black trousers as they scurried about, pressing both palms to their foreheads and shaking their heads in dismay. Waiters with full trays collided with each other and with the pizza lovers. Pizzas fell on pizza lovers. (These were considered the fortunate ones; they ate much sooner than the others.) Many pizza lovers fell into fountain pools. Many pizzas fell into fountain pools. The thick-crust pizza sank rapidly to the bottom. The thin-crust plain pizzas floated. Pizza lovers and waiters waded through the chilly waters to reach these "pizza lillies." Some waterlogged pizzas were salvaged from the bottom of the shallower pools and brought back to the ristoranti for drying. Some pizza lovers dried and reheated these wet pizzas on their smoldering vendettas, which they always carried with them.

Galileo, surveying this melee from the top of the tower, acted quickly. He hurriedly wrote instructions on a cannon ball and dropped it to his assistant at the base of the tower. The cannon ball instructed Matematico, Galileo's most faithful assistant, to rush the ball as rapidly as possible to the Army-Navy store. There was a very important message on the ball for the owner of the store.

Matematico did not act on his initial impulse to fire the cannon ball over into the Army-Navy store. He very quickly realized that, although this would be the fastest way of getting the message to its destination, the loud boom of the cannon could panic the pizza lovers and bring on the paparazzi.

Instead, Matematico ran with the ball, steadily towards the Army-Navy store, deftly avoiding the slippery spots where tomato sauce had been spilled. He entered the store panting for breath, his arms aching from the burden of the ball.

"Militante! Militante!" he called out. "I..." With this, he collapsed in exhaustion on the floor.

Militante, the owner of the Army-Navy store, heard the call and came forth just as the cannon ball, which had slipped from Matematico's grasp, came rolling towards him. Militante recognized the ball as one of his own, and instinctively understood the meaning of this rolling cannon ball. He gathered the ball in his arms and rapidly read the message:

"Tables. Bring tables. Stop. Chairs. Bring chairs. Stop. Tablecloths. Bring tablecloths. Stop. Don't stop until all this is brought. Stop. Signed, Your pal, Gal. Stop."

Militante immediately put the cannon ball and Gal together and realized that Galileo was doing his thing at the tower with his (Militante's) cannon balls. Enlisting the aid of his assistant, Soldato, he loaded the tablecloths, chairs and tables onto a surplus chariot. With Matematico leading the way, the tables, tablecloths, chairs, Soldato and Militante made their way towards the eating areas.

The pizza lovers saw three figures and a chariot approaching, and were concerned. "What could this be?" they wondered. One of the figures was waving his arms above his head and down around his body. This was Matematico, communicating with Galileo on the tower. Most of the pizza lovers thought they were being chased from the eating areas. When the chariot was recognized as a used Nazionale Guardia chariot, there was genuine alarm that the Guard had been called out to disperse the pizza lovers. But when the red checkered tablecloths were recognized, the pizza lovers felt immediately at ease. The familiar checkered pattern was at once associated with ristoranti, food and the good life.

Galileo directed the placement of the tables from the top of the tower. He had them placed in concentric circles around the pizzeria and ristoranti. This turned out to be a very efficient arrangement; all the pizza lovers could be served with a minimum of tumult and turmoil in a very orderly manner. What could have been a frenzied foray turned into a pizza party.

After eating, the pizza lovers returned to the tower for the conclusion of Galileo's experiments. It was a day of high accomplishment. Theory was now a reality; gravity was confirmed.

Galileo was acclaimed. The townspeople were very happy. They had been living with a dark question mark over their heads, which now became an exclamation point for the pride which they felt.

A movement arose to restore the original name of Town of Pisa. The town fathers again spoke. "If you now change the name you will destroy our economic image and all that the Leaning Tower of Pisa stands for." The public had to be made to understand the importance of not reverting back to the original name. It would be disastrous. Galileo had made the Tower of Pisa, not the Tower of Pizza, famous. The town was now known for its tower, not for its pizza. Travellers on the roads would see the tower and say "Let's go to that town to see the tower and then have some pizza," not "Let's go have some pizza in that town and then see the tower." The entire emphasis had shifted. The tower was bringing in the pizza business, and the town fathers knew it.

An intensive campaign was initiated to make all the townspeople understand the gravity of the situation. Galileo toured the town. He went into all the neighborhoods. He was one of them, and spoke directly to the people.

pisa. Plain, please." Pisa and pizza had, for all practical purposes, become synonymous. And in the Town of Pisa, where pizza had been kind for almost 200 years, Galileo was now the hero.

Galileo's personal appearances were the major factor in bringing the people to understand that the name should not be changed back. The campaign was very effective. Soon even those who were very vocal in demanding the name be changed back were overheard in the ristoranti and pizzerias saying to the waiters, "A slice of

# Commercial McClue-In

by "Kid" Sieve

"We don't smoke the shit, we just sell it...We reserve that 'right' for the young, the poor, the black and the stupid."

—An executive for RJR/Nabisco, tobacco empire giants  
I guess you've all heard the flap about UPTOWN by now. This was a campaign which was to be directed specifically at blacks, test-marketing in the Philly area, which was hastily pulled by its sponsor (I think it was Philip Morris) when their scheme was exposed. Now they're going for a different market, one they call "vile women." I'm sure you're all dying to know who vile women are. Basically, this is the cigarette company's buzzword for working class women with little education. Not only exploitative, but sexist and classist (and racist) as well. It's a wiser move smokers don't just boycott cigarettes on political grounds, but as someone who's hooked on another legal drug (I won't say which), I can certainly sympathize with nicotine addicts. This is all just business as usual for tobacco companies, whose biggest new market internationally has been Third World countries because much of the "developed" world just doesn't buy the lie any more. Meanwhile, my man Mark Green, now NYC's Consumer Affairs Commissioner, seems to have let the office get to his head a little. He's attacking RJR/Nabisco for their highly phallic "Smooth Character" Camel ads, claiming the ads are "inducing children to smoke." Green discovered one such ad in a recent issue of Rolling Stone which, according to Newsday, "had a perforated fold allowing readers to delete the congressionally mandated warning label about smoking." I tend to believe it's not children who are enticed by this but the usual assholes who read Rolling Stone, the 18-35 male crowd. I personally wouldn't mind seeing these people get self-inflicted black lungs, for the most part, but I wonder if Green doesn't have a point about teen and preteen emulation of what's "cool." Especially when it involves, again, objectification of women (almost all the "Smooth Character" ads feature background bimbos). On the other side, an RJR asshole defends the ad campaign by saying that Green's "ignoring all the research that says that cigarette advertising has little or no impact on anybody's decision to smoke." OH REALLY? THEN WHY ARE YOU ADVERTISING, DICKFACE? The execshit-for-brains also claims there's a conspiracy against the company, a "carefully orchestrated anti-smoking campaign." Well, duh. Isn't that just a tiny bit more health-conscious than a carefully orchestrated pro-smoking campaign?

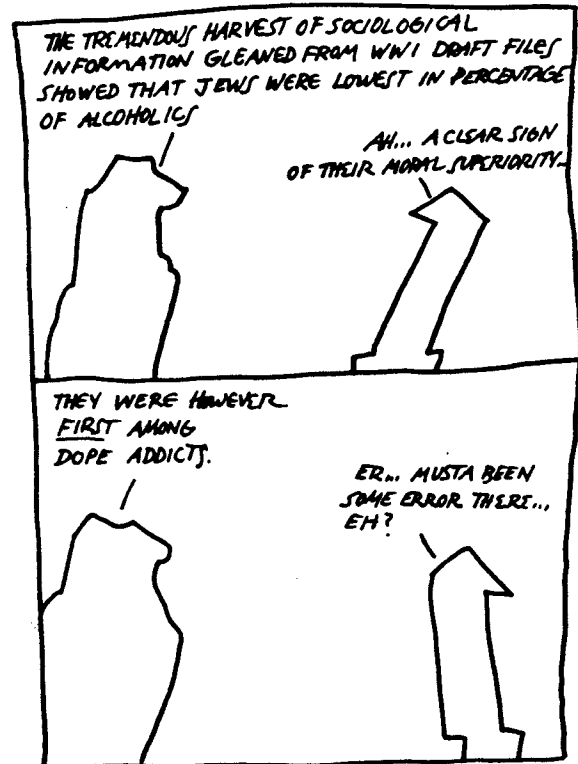
Sometimes I wish these people would all go into a more humane business, like growing pot. Unfortunately, the drug war is becoming more and more hysterical, presumably 1) because we need a new "enemy" to justify military waste now that democratic socialism has taken Eastern Europe by storm, and 2) to divert attention away from the fact that George Bush and his gang of dozens at the White House, Oliver North's basement included, have been some of the worst drug-runners (the contra-cocaine connection, among others) since the CIA importing opium during the Vietnam War. (By the way, all this is fairly extensively documented, but not in the "papers of record" that don't want to encourage Americans to think about these connections.) As some wise person once said, in war, the first casualty is truth. A fine example of the end justifying the means was reported in the January 1990 edition of ZENGER (see "Fan Moose" for more details on this paper), which reported on one of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's ads. We've blasted these self-righteous hypocrites before, so this should come as no surprise to you folks. There is a public service spot whose tag line is "If you use pot, you're not using your brain," whose visual shows "changes" in the brainwaves caused by smoking marijuana. Of course, this ad completely ignores the findings of the National Academy of Science marijuana report that pot appears to have no detectable effects on waking EEGs. So to whom do the brainwaves belong? Turns out they're those of a person in a coma or otherwise unconscious. Oh. Kinda makes you think about that other Partnership-sponsored ad with the fourteen-year-old boy skewered in this column a few issues back. The station KABC had a respected UCLA doctor debunk the ad on a live broadcast one day, and the next day actually ran the ad again (supposedly pressured to by its parent company). Says ZENGER, "When confronted with the facts the spots producer admitted to falsifying the graphic, but declared that in a war on drugs the end" (come on now, all together) "justifies the means."

Looks like this'll be my All-Drugs issue, because another ghost has come back to haunt me. The ever-lovin' Food and Drug Administration has struck again. Mere days after unleashing a report claiming that consumers need no longer fear chemical carcinogens in corporate-prepared meats, fruits, etc. because so-called "natural carcinogens" are far more dangerous, the government agency has actually approved the NutraShit company's new product, Simplese (also forewarned in this column some time ago). Yum yum, tastes great! Mm mm, all-natural fat substitute! Made from eggs and milk, really! Another classic example of creating a need, then filling it. If the American public weren't so brainwashed into believing they must lower caloric and fat intake instead of just plain eating more sensibly, this latest scam wouldn't be possible. Listen to an MIT neurobiologist: "It replaces fat, at nine calories per gram, with protein, at four calories per gram." So we're talking five calories here? That add up to, what, maybe 40 or 50 in a typical week? I mean, get real, folks! God forbid anyone should come out and admit that certain fats are as necessary to bodily health as certain proteins, and too much of anything, protein included, is harmful. But no, that would be common sense.

# CREATIVE WRITHING

by John See

"Hello, I'm here to sign up for the dance class."  
"I'll be right with you. If you know the course number, you can start filling out one of the green cards."  
"Yes, I know the course number, but...uh, excuse me, ma'am, could I borrow a pen?"  
"Here you go. I can't believe how many students come in here without a pen or pencil."  
"Well, ma'am, I'm a dancer. We don't have much use for pencils and pens in the studio."  
"I see. Uh, wait a minute. Did you say you wanted to sign up for a dance class? You're in the wrong building. This is the independent study program, correspondence courses. You've made some sort of mistake."  
"I don't think so, ma'am. It says so right here in your brochure: W203 Creative Writhing. I took the poetry option."  
"Look, young lady, that's supposed to be Creative Writing. How could a dance class have a poetry option?"  
"Ithawthedbeveetoays."  
"Come on, speak up, it's all right."  
"I kind of thought there might be videotapes."  
"Well, there are no videotapes—I mean, there is no Creative Writhing class. It's Creative Writing. Do you want to sign up for this course or not?"  
"It's really not a dance class?"  
"No, it's not."  
"Well, I don't think I want to sign up for it then, but I did see another class I was interested in."  
"Is it another dance class?"  
"No, it's not, it's a science class. You see, I'm interested in ESP. The name of the class is Psychics' Lab. Four credits."



I don't want you folks to misread me. I'm not anti-drug. I have many friends who ingest NutraShit (although the stuff makes me physically ill) and smoke cigarettes (ditto). I don't begrudge them their pleasures. But as the line between harmless and harmful blurs ever more as the arbitrary division between legal and illegal shows less and less correspondence to reality, I think all who indulge in whatever drugs should be as aware as possible of how the powers that be (mostly corporate and government profiteers) try to manipulate them. See you at the Pot Parade in New York on May 5!



# CLOTHING

by Mark Henkes

It's been said that you can't meet friendlier people than those who live in a small town, yet I'm hesitant to introduce myself to those who live here. I've never visited a small town before, and I feel like I'm intruding on a way of life very different from the one I'm used to. Conservatism, closely-knit families, generations of tradition—I sense all of these things here and they seem to startlingly foreign to me. Yet even in this small town, located hundreds of miles from the big city, I can't escape what I wanted so much to escape—the clothing.

Even here people wear a great variety of clothes, and now as I walk the streets I wonder what kind of personality hides behind a skirt, a blouse, a pair of pants. I see men and women wearing skin-tight jeans. This signals to me they want to show off their slim waistlines to members of one sex or the other, whichever they choose, or whichever they choose for the moment. I realize some women wear skirts and shorts because they want to keep their legs cool on such a hot day. But the mini-skirts; these women obviously want to attract someone, probably a man, but who knows for sure? And then I see men and women wearing baggy clothing—some of them because they want to conceal their bodies to make others wonder what beauty and sensuality lies beneath all of that bagginess; others because they are actually old-fashioned and they conceal nothing that they want us to wonder about. Some energetic people wear bright colors or polka-dots or wide stripes because they want to project a congenial or assertive mood; others prefer dark, solid colors to project any wide range of possible moods which probably varies from person to person.

As for me, I don't wear clothing to project any mood or morals. I just wear what happens to be available. I know there are others like me out there, but they could be wearing just about anything and I have no idea how to spot them. I'm not even sure these are the persons I want to meet. I think I tend to wear darker shades of color; not because I want to project my mood, but because whenever I wear bright colors I seem to attract vivacious persons who ask me embarrassing questions without even realizing it or they demand I join them and their friends when I don't even know who they are.

So, this is my plight; how can I determine whom to approach in this town? Will the woman in baggy clothing turn out to be so obnoxious that I'll have to stand up and walk away? Will the woman in skin-tight jeans turn her head away from me when I try to kiss her? Sometimes I think I would be more successful if I went braless or if I shaved my legs more often. This is all very confusing to me, and I can see already that even this small town will be filled with as much uncertainty as the city.

# HOW TO REFLECT YOUR IGNORANCE

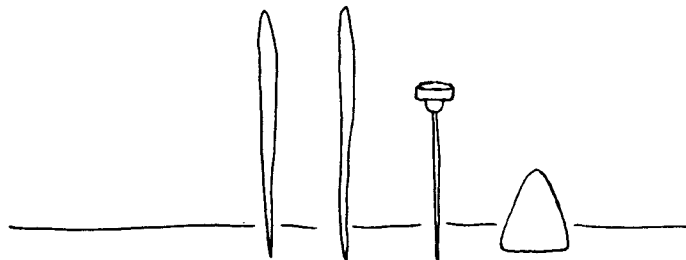
by Sigmund Weiss

To produce a poem, in your thoughts reflect as if you are sculpting clay into a pattern. Then, look from a distance at your sculpting. Observe the words you used in each sentence you thought enhanced the pattern. After this, cut out from the pattern those words you think are extraneous. Then again take a look from a distance; observe if the entire pattern reflects a thought you did not know you were expressing within that pattern. If such is not expressed therein, rearrange your words, deleting what words seem to impede the pattern's development, until you arrive at that thought you never knew was in your reflections. If the poem does reflect your hidden thought, you may have truly formed a poem, or those possibilities of what is termed a poem.

from notes of 4/8/80, revised 2/13/80

THE  
TOOTH PICKS

MEET MY  
COUSINS!



## Police Jailed In Minister Molestation

PITTSBURGH (YU) — Police Monday arrested themselves for brutality in connection with the beating deaths of 11 supporters of a jailed Lutheran minister. The congregation of suburban Naivete Lutheran Church had asked police to keep away supporters of the Rev. Daniel Solberg, who was fired as their pastor because of his militant pro-labor stand. Solberg, leader of the Revolutionary Army of the Poor and founder of the Symbionese Liberation Air Force, has not been seen since he was detained by authorities in early March, 1985. Since then, many of his supporters have been slain, their battered bodies found dumped in alleys in this dying steel city.

YU News Service

TRUE MASTER OF THE HOUSEHOLD CHASTISES  
SLOTHFUL DRAGONS FOR NOT CATCHING  
ENOUGH MICE !...



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## LETTERS from the ALPHABET



Box 2243 — YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, 44504

4 WRONGS RIGHTED

IN HER SUNDAY T.V. SERMON SISTER LILLIE BEGAN: "The wages of sin is death". She talked about the seven deadly sins — pride, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, avarice and sloth. I'm guilty of all seven especially the last one but I'm still living. She didn't touch on my favorite four — suicidal, womanless, winnerless wars, inflationary fixed wages, something less than a 100% blue collar work force, and death of our herenows. To end wars (99%), inflation (100%), unemployment (100%) and death (100%) send S.A.S.E. to:



# FOREVERNESS

by Barry Lank

**NEWS ITEM:** Many people who have been considered legally dead and then been revived report having seen dead family members waiting for them at their bedside.

I was very old, I was tired to the bone. I lay in bed trying to let go, when everything around me grew bright and I floated into a blinding, perfect white light, which grew impossibly stronger as I drifted upwards. The golden cord connecting me to the earth gradually vanished, and suddenly I was at the dinner table with my mom and dad and sister Donna, and for the rest of eternity I was 12 years old and it was Monday at around 6pm.

"Do you say things like that deliberately to hurt me?" my mother asked my sister for the millionth, billionth, trillionth time in that same condescending way that drove everyone nuts. They'd been at it for awhile. We'd had some huge argument over Donna getting drunk on a beach in 1966, and after one millenium of refusing to speak to any of us, Donna was now making up for literally aeons of quietly stewing in her own poison. This had taken all attention off me and I'd had time to come up with a plan.

I was really going to get out this time. Maybe all of us would.

Do you think this dinner scene was the only thing I'd ever experienced in life? I remember other faces—faces of people I'd moved up in business with, but mostly the face of a young woman named Sarah, a symbol of something pleasant out there somewhere, this woman I barely knew. What kept me here instead was this continuous argument, latching onto us like a metal clamp. Letting my family get to me when I was alive was what put me here in the first place.

Across from me was my father. His peculiar hell is to sit like a lump of orange putty, unable to get a handle on anything.

"I wouldn't say things like that if you didn't say what you said when I said what I said when you said what I said," Donna said still yet again one more time. When I'd last seen Donna in life, she was an old woman—severe in certain ways, never married, but apparently happy to live simply. Now she was 17, had bad acne and thought everyone was plotting against her.

"We have a nice house, we're a nice family," Mother said. "Shouldn't we just try and have a nice meal? Isn't that a good idea? Didn't that ever cross your mind? Haven't you ever considered that? Isn't that something you've thought of? Didn't that ever occur to you? Are you listening? Is this getting through at all?"

Mother turns to me. It's finally coming my way. I'm ready. "How are the two of you going to live? Barry, who's going to tolerate you when you grow up?"

"Well, Mother," I said, "I realize you have said this in the spirit of constructive criticism, and I take it with respect."

There was a long pause.

"Come again?" my father said.

The table seemed to get a little larger, pushing us away from one another, as we sat quietly, our feet shuffling, no one knowing what to do with their hands.

"You're both growing up like animals," Mother finally said, though confusedly.

"What can I tell you? When you're right, you're right. And you're right." I acted as glib and cheery as if I'd never see these people again.

"What's going on here?" Donna said.

We drifted farther apart with increasing speed. Donna was some distance away now, approaching the horizon of the now mammothly expanded dinner table. I wanted to explain to her what I was doing, but that might have slowed the process. I remained polite, optimistic. The dinner table stretched to where it no longer had

substance. And finally I could see Dad—looking like little more than a rusty speck in the distance—decisively stand up from the table and say, "Well, then it's settled."

I was finally alone.

Other figures emerged from surrounding clouds—people with whom I'd conflicted, about whom I'd had strong feelings, people who, for one reason or another, had stuck in my memory.

"They're doing this crap to us again," said one voice—Earl Taylor, a guy with whom I used to work. Not a bad sort, really, but a whiner, and that gets to you after awhile. It would only eventually put me back where I started.

"We'll muddle through it, I'm sure," I said. I continued floating.

With everyone I encountered, I happily deferred to whatever they had to say. Each new person I encountered was milder, from a pleasanter points in my life. But I kept a certain face in mind—a face that represented the most pleasant of all—and so found myself in college, as far in this direction as I could go.

It was a party. I forget who'd invited me, but two of the people who lived in the house where it took place were psychology students, and somehow a bunch of us had ended up sitting in a circle in someone's bedroom doing a classroom encounter group exercise (popular at the time) of exchanging "verbal gifts." One person would give another a compliment, and that second person would give a compliment to a third, and so forth. I was sitting on purple cushions, surrounded by lush plants and Asian tapestries.

"Roxanne, I really like the way you deal with people," some woman said. "You always make people feel good after you've talked to them."

Roxanne blushed, then continued the process. "Well, I just want to tell Jack that he's one of the most intelligent people I've ever known."

I sat and contemplated Sarah across the room, her light hair and blue eyes welcoming the world.

Jack smiled broadly. "Actually, I'm glad it's my turn to talk because I know something the others in the group might not. It's Barry's birthday."

Everyone went "Oooh," and congratulated me. Sarah smiled, her gentle looks now aimed only my way.

"I think it would be nice if everyone in the circle gave Barry a verbal gift," someone said.

"Well, Barry, I really admire your sense of humor."

"I think you're intelligent. Just because I told Jack that he was intelligent doesn't mean I don't think you're intelligent too."

"I only just met you tonight, but you seem like a really nice guy."

Around the circle it went, various compliments, with certain thematic redundancies, until they'd finished and asked if I wanted to give verbal gifts back to all the people in the group. Sarah was sitting beside me now, a warm earth mother the color of the sun. I remember when this had happened in life. I had gone around the circle flattering everybody at some length.

Boy was this boring.

I turned to Sarah.

"You're so big on criticizing people," I said. "But when someone criticizes you, you won't even listen." My mother was in front of me again. The table was still set, the food still hot. Donna materialized on my left as I was talking. "Why should I listen to what you say if you don't listen to me?"

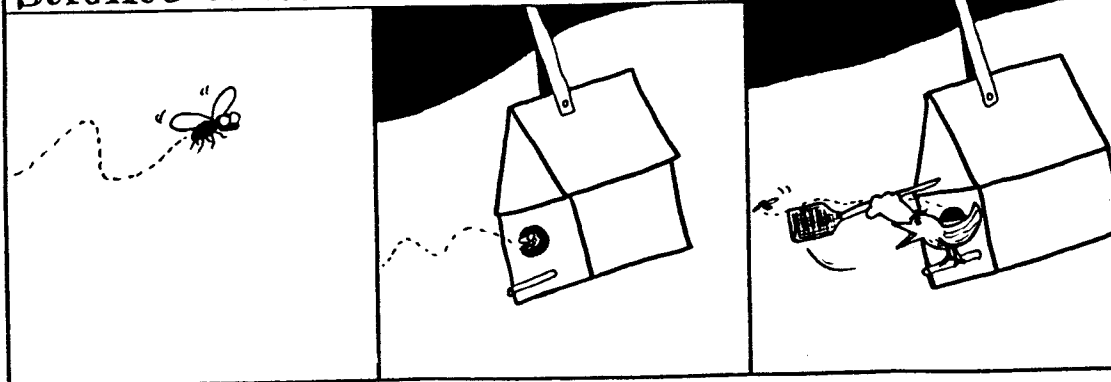
"I listen to you," Mother said. "I'm happy to listen. What do you want to tell me?"

Finally Dad appeared.

"I've told you before what I've wanted to tell you," I said. "But when I tell you what I told you, you tell me I never tell you, and then you tell me to clean my room or get you a Kleenex or something to get me out of the room so you won't have to continue with this argument!"

## Science and Nature Comics

by Brian Atanog '88



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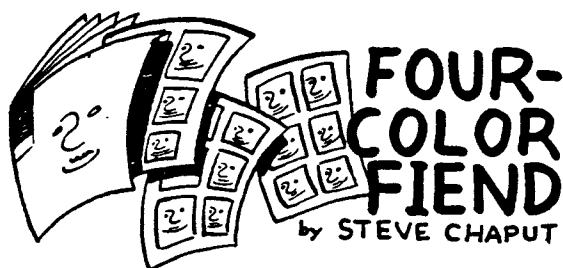
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Before I do anything else, let me apologize to Evan Dorkin for misspelling his name in my review of PIRATE CORP\$! (Slave Labor; \$1.75 US/\$2.50 Can.). I don't know if the mishap was my fault or Elayne's (I think it was the typewriter's fault, honey—ew), but I felt badly about it when Evan himself wrote me and pointed it out. Sorry, guy! By the way, PC is highly recommended...

On a sad note, I have to pass along the news that IJ staffer J.P. Morgan's book FISSION CHICKEN has been cancelled with issue #4. Originally scheduled as a four-issue mini-series, J.P. was approached by Fantagraphics to continue the title, but low sales have forced the book back to its original run. Too bad FC couldn't have pulled off a cameo in one of the Turtle books, huh? That and an "action figure" insure sales. Everyone is urged to go out and buy copies of the FC series, as well as the compilation novel, both from Fantagraphics.

I remember as a kid that friends and I discovered a number of copies of what were once called "Tijuana Bibles." These 8-page booklets were about the size of your standard minicomic and were printed on typewriter-quality paper, often with slightly heavier stock for the covers. The "stories" in these booklets were take-offs (no pun intended) on popular comic strips and cartoon characters in which they engaged in sex. What did Blondie do while Dagwood was at work? Did everything get bigger on Popeye when he ate spinach? I'm sure you get the idea.

These books existed pretty much for only one purpose, with no false pretenses about artistic value or storytelling techniques. In some ways, they paved the way for the undergrounds with their irreverent use of sex and pokes at social mores.

In the last few years, several of the alternative/independent comics companies (anyone besides Marvel and DC) have begun to push the limits of what many might call "good taste." Characterization and plot have, as in the case of the "bibles," taken a back seat to graphic representations of sex and violence; ethnic and sexual stereotypes are passed off as satirical commentary.

Now don't get me wrong. I have nothing against either sex or violence in comics (or in film and television, for that matter). I simply question whether or not it is necessary to use either element merely to increase sales. In some cases they may be an important part of the story, in which case their inclusion makes sense.

I'd like to do a quick overview of some comics currently available either as new releases or recent back issues. As you'll see, I have tried to judge each book on its own merits (if any) and avoided blanket condemnations. By the way, all are b&w titles.

#### SEX

OMAHA, THE CAT DANCER (Kitchen Sink; \$2 US/\$2.40 Can.)—Kate Worley and Reed Waller's "anthropomorphic soap opera." In the best tradition of the soaps, we follow the day-to-day lives of Omaha and her associates through high crimes (murder and blackmail) and misdemeanors (adultery and voyeurism). A well-drawn and finely-written drama along the lines of a soft-core thirtysomething.

(The sex scenes are part of the natural progression of the plot.) MELODY (Kitchen Sink; \$2 US/\$2.80 Can.)—This is the semi-autobiographical story of writer Sylvie Rancourt, a stripper/exotic dancer, based on Sylvie's life in a profession many feel demeaning and corrupt. As in OMAHA, the sexual situations are part of the overall storyline. The art by Jacques Boivin is quite nice, making each character an individual. Adult and well done.

DOLL #1 (Rip-Off Press, \$2.50 US/\$3.50 Can.)—A mini-series written and drawn by Guy Colwell, concerning the creation of the world's most perfect "sex doll." Doll, the only name given the creation, is the ultimate sex object, and the story deals with her creation and exploitation by various men involved in the project. Colwell begins the first issue with an explanation/apology for doing this book, thereby distancing himself from the project by saying that it's a necessity for him to do the book in order to make money so he can have leisure time to work on more artistically motivated projects in the future. Oddly enough, this is the same excuse used by his character, the model maker (perhaps knowingly). While the book, left to its own devices, is a sensitive portrayal of loneliness and obsession, Colwell's intro makes the readers feel as if they've been caught sneaking into a 42nd Street peep-show. Recommended, with reservations.

SUSHI (Shunga Comix; \$2.50 US)—Done in imitation "manga" style by "Tokyo Jones" (yeah, right), this is space-opera with soft-core sex thrown in. More like the R-rated version of FLESH GORDON than the X-rated INVASION OF THE SPACE VIXENS (both recommended, natch) it works quite well. A series to read just for the fun of it.

WEIRD SHUT #3 (John P. Mozer, P.O. Box 180224, Brooklyn, NY 11218-0003)—Stories by Spain Rodriguez, Larry Welz and others. Reminds one of the old "undergrounds" at their raunchiest, and a lot of fun for fans of that type of stuff (the Four-Color Fiend being among them). For all you Betty Page fans, you should know that the pin-up dream is featured in the main story. Well done!

CHERRY POPTART (Last Gasp; \$2.50 US)—Larry Welz and the other artists on this book make no apologies for the content. Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll the way "Bob" intended. Nancy Reagan and Jerry Falwell would have seizures over this stuff! If that's not a recommendation, I don't know what is. Cherry and her friends are the flipside of those wimps at Riverdale High. The Archie gang would be rolled and sodomized on this side of the tracks, and who'd complain? A lot of nasty fun and naked bodies. (By the way, I recommend the X-rated OZ takeoff in #8, in which Ellie Dee, Cherry's best friend and sometimes lover, does a weird Dorothy impersonation along with three vaguely familiar companions—very amusing).

LEATHER & LACE (Aircel; \$2.50 US/\$3.25 Can.)—A controversial title, available in two formats, a regular "general" version and a pre-bagged "adult" (read X-rated) version. The plot of both deals with prostitution and "white slavery," but the "adult" version has extra pages of graphic sex inserted in the storylines (apparently at random, in some cases). Barry Blair handles writing and art chores in this book, as he does in THE RIPPER, another pre-bagged comic from Aircel (\$2.50 US/\$3 Can.). THE RIPPER, a 4-issue mini-series, comes in only one version, but the graphic material here is violence, not sex. The problem I have with RIPPER is not the gore, which is almost cartoonish in its graphic overblown style, but the depiction of African-Americans. They are stereotypical characters out of a bigot's nightmare, barely literate thugs out to beat old people and gang-rape white women.

Aircel tries to distance itself from charges of racism by stating in the first issue that we see the world through the eyes of the protagonist, who sees surroundings in terms defined by his psychosis. Since the major turning point of the story (the brutal rape and murder of the title character's girlfriend) takes place out of his sight, I think it's a case of trying to cover the bias after the fact. Now, for all I know Blair himself may be black, in which case it would be interesting to hear his side.

#### VIOLENCE

JACK THE RIPPER (Eternity; \$2.25 US/\$2.70 Can.)—Actually, Eternity is part of the Malibu publishing group that includes Aircel and Adventure (and possibly a few others). Each group seems to have its own peculiar sensitivity, with Eternity doing a nice range of quality stuff like THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS and CAPTAIN HARLOCK. Considering the egocentricities at Malibu, one would think that a book dealing with one of history's most famous serial killers would end up under the Aircel imprint. Surprisingly enough, this version of the Ripper tale, which plays with the facts of the case to bring in new characters, is not very violent at all. In some ways it is similar to a made-for-television version, with its introduction of a married couple of private investigators, sort of a cross between Nick and Nora Charles and the John Steed/Emma Peel team. The murders themselves are off-panel, and even when the bodies are shown the angle doesn't allow for seeing the mutilation, which is only spoken about. In fact, the most graphic violence is presented on the covers, which don't really fit the tone of the interior work. Writer Bruce Balfour and artist Chris Jones are doing a great job on this title, and I for one hope that we'll be seeing both the creators and their Victorian detectives again. Recommended!

A few things have been sent in the last couple of months that I'd like to quickly review:

HOMO PATROL (Tom Roberts, 333 S. East Ave. #209, Oak Park, IL 60302; \$3.50 US/\$4.20 Can., add 50¢ for postage)—Some of you may remember that portions of this book were published in INSIDE JOKE a while ago. This is from the guys who bring you ANTISOCIAL, a recommended collection of alternative comix. Tom and K.L. Roberts examine rampant homophobia in the Age of AIDS. May disturb some of you, but it's recommended by yours truly.

LET A SNEER BE YOUR UMBRELLA (50¢ + SASE to Haricots Verts, 468 Anita Dr., Millbrae, CA 94030)—An 8-page mini from K. Greene and Haricots Verts, featuring their creation Curly The Handsome Cat. A more intellectual answer to Garfield. Cute, indeed.

RADIUM SKULL COMIX (Ablative Press, P.O. Box 831321, Richardson, TX 75083-1321; 50¢)—Inspired 2-pager on the title character and his latest rantings. In the tradition of the best SubG and underground weirdness. You might also ask Johnny Alucard for his catalog and get doomed to his mailing list. Makes opening an envelope a life-affirming act.

CRAZY ADULT #4 (Robert Michael, 46 Barn Road, Agawam, MA 01001; \$2.50)—Sort of Peter Bagge by way of "Big Daddy" Roth. Strange stuff and scary drawings by the always-interesting Robert Michael. An 8½ x 11, 50-page extravaganza of weirdness and the search for God.

GOOD CLEAN FUN (Gene Mahoney, c/o The Daily Californian, 2150 Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA 94704; \$1)—A 4-page 8½ x 11 collection of nine sample strips by Mahoney. Amusing bits on George Bush, the environment and vultures with dreadlocks. Pretty nice, mon! Apparently planned as a monthly.

Just in time for deadline, the latest AMAZING HEROES PREVIEW (#176; \$6.95 US/\$8.50 Can.) has shown up. The size has been pared down to 140+ pages, and a few things had to be dropped. Gone is the overview of cancelled and never-published titles, as well as the interviews and genre sidebars.

Missing also, due to lateness of events, are the previews of the titles by new publisher Valiant. This company, overseen by Jim Shooter (formerly of Marvel), will carry the comics featuring various Nintendo characters (Super Mario Bros., Donkey Kong, etc.) and a number of titles previously done for Gold Key (Turk, Son of

(more comics talk next page)

Stone, Doctor Solarr and Magnus Robot Fighter).

A few things to which I'm looking forward are: BATMAN & GRENDEL (a crossover); BIG NUMBERS (Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz); ELFQUEST: KINGS OF THE BROKEN WHEEL; 'MAZING MAN SPECIAL (yeah!); and adaptations of BLOOD FEAST, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, WILD CARDS and THE WILD, WILD WEST. Save those dimes up; it looks to be a heavy summer!

Elayne would like me to mention a comic tie-in to the recent collapse of junk-bond giant Drexel Burnham Lambert. It seems that DC Comics was in the midst of producing a comic book promotional tool for the corporation when the bottom finally fell out. The book, called AMERICA INK, concerned itself with inventor/entrepreneur Tom Balou in this fictional-but-inspiring Tale of Capitalism At Work. According to an article in New York Newsday, DC editor Joe Orlando was so taken in by the promises made by Drexel in the comic that he invested heavily and lost when the bubble burst. Orlando is one of the old-timers, and made a name for himself with EC back in the '50s.

PUMA BLUES (Mirage Studios; \$1.70 US/\$2 Can.)—I've just had an enjoyable experience. Over the last few days I have been able to read the first 22 issues of PUMA BLUES, and have travelled into a beautiful place of pristine grandeur and flying mantas. I have also seen mankind at its worst: racism, brutality, exploitation, decaying at its core. This series has some of the most gorgeous art and insightful writing that I have ever seen in the comics field. Stephen Murphy and Michael Zulli, the writer and artist respectively, have co-created a consistent world all too similar to our own. As with all good science fiction, they have used real events and current happenings as a springboard for their alternative future. They use this all-too-near future to show us how humankind has all but doomed itself to a miserable future of foul environment and slow death. Fortunately, there is an underlying theme of optimism below the gloom, a glimmer of hope that it's not too late to save us from ourselves.

The early PUMA BLUES are collected in two books which cover issues 1 through 19. Book One: Watch That Man contains issues 1-12 (\$19.95 ppd.), and Book Two: Sense of Doubt has #s 13-19 (\$8.95 + \$2 for postage). Along with Book Two, you'll receive the "Fraying Weave," which collects the pro-environmental columns which have appeared in PB since the beginning.

In my mailing, I also found a copy of PB "#241," a mini which bridges #s 24 and 25; and HUNGRY MONKEY #1, which covers the Panama invasion and the "War on Drugs," plus reprints an assortment of ads and articles from places as diverse as Trump Plaza to Jimmy Swaggart's Ministries. All this is available from Stephen Murphy, c/o P.O. Box 774, Northampton, MA 01061.

Both Elayne and I recommend this series, and commend Murphy and Zulli for their political and artistic courage. To coin a phrase, "must have, double bag!" (Geez, Mylar isn't biodegradable, is it?)

A few mainstream comics deserve mention before closing: TIME MASTERS (DC; \$1.75 US)—This 8-part mini-series not only updates the Silver Age character Rip Hunter, but revises the use of time travel in the DC Universe (at least until Keith Giffin wants to do something different). It brings in elements of the Illuminati, Flash, villain Vandal Savage, Animal Man and Booster Gold. Look for cameos by a number of DC heroes from earlier ages. Not bad!

THE ATLANTIS CHRONICLES (DC; \$2.95 US)—DC's 7-part series will attempt to straighten out the extremely convoluted history of Atlantis, thereby tying together all the divergent storylines and explain how Lori Lemura and Aquaman have vastly different homes. Nicely done so far.

I may be too late in doing this, but I'd like to recommend that all you comic book/zine publishers out there send a SASE to the Grove Street Gallery (100 Grove St., 3rd fl., Worcester, MA 01609) which is planning a Comic/Fanzine Show this spring and is looking for interested participants. Hurry up now!

Well, I'm not going to promise anything special for next time, but I'm sure something will pop up. If nothing catches my eye, we just might cover some personal faves...

## National Geographic Discovers Hostages

**PHNOM PENH, Kampuchea (YU)** — National Geographic researchers were startled to discover a group of American hostages in the jungle 35 miles northwest of this city late Sunday. The hostages, apparently taken during WWII, appear to be in good condition and appealed to their government to agree to their captors' demands so they may be returned to their families.

A spokesdiplomat for the U.S. State Department, who wishes the hostages had never been found, would only state that no record of demands leading to the release of the alleged hostages could be located in department files and that, as a matter of national policy, should demands indeed be made, they could not be met, since the government does not condone terrorism or negotiate with terrorists. YU News Service

Once a year, big executives from major department stores come to New York to play with toys. The 87th Annual International Toy Fair was held here in New York the week before Presidents' Day, and I got to go to again to see what all the little nippers (and a few big nippers like me) will be clamoring for this year.

The hands-down winner for exciting new toy lines this year is once again Playmates, who successfully shed itself of its reputation as a girls' animatronic doll (anybody remember Cricket?) company to get the hottest boys' toy line for two years straight, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Playmates grabbed the toy licence for Dick Tracy, and is releasing a line of fourteen action figures based on the classic strip and upcoming movie. Only two good guys (Dick and Sam Catchem), leaving plenty of room for the baddies. Flattop, The Brow and Pruneface are all in attendance, plus a few lesser-known (but still beloved to fans) boys like Steve the Tramp, Influence, and (be still my heart) The Blank (will that one sell to fans of DC's THE QUESTION or not?). Add to that two collector-quality 15-inch statues of Dick (Warren Beatty) and Breathless Mahoney (played by Madonna—talk about casting made in heaven), and you've got a line that the older collectors are gonna go nuts for.

And let's not forget the turtles. To celebrate (read "take flagrant advantage of") the release of the TMNT film on March 30 (go see it or I'll kill your dog), Playmates is releasing seventeen new figures for the line, including a Triceraton, The Fugitoid (for you readers of the comic) and, based on the success of the Usagi Yojimbo figure from last year, Panda Kahn, another anthropomorphic (bet ya thought only Jed Martinez could throw around terms like that, diddenya?) comic character. (Now all we have to do is hope for Flaming Carrot and Cerebus...)

Strangely enough, two companies are doing Batman action figures this year. Toy Biz is continuing its popular DC Super Heroes line from last year, and also a new line of Marvel Figures. The new DC figures include Two-face, Flash, Hawkman, and Green Lantern (sorry, Guy Gardner fans, it's Hal Jordan); and the Marvel characters include Spiderman, the Silver Surfer, a Green Hulk, The Punisher, and Dr. Octopus (watch for the Punisher figure—with only two figures in each box, it's a guaranteed collectable). If sales are good, there'll be an X-Men line next year.

Kenner is also doing a line of Batman figures, under the heading "The Dark Knight Collection." The figures are rather interesting—Batman in several "special weaponry" suits (golden armor, etc.); and a Joker figure with skin that turns to fleshtone in icewater. (A little nit-picking from an avid collector: several of the accessories on the figures and one of the vehicles, the Bat-Jet, are repainted leftovers from the abortive second-year Silverhawks line.) Also new from Kenner is a line based on the Ghost With The Most, Beetlejuice, assorted figures that all do gross stuff (one comes with spikes to insert in the figure, one explodes, etc.) and some really cool vehicles.

But even that pales before the '60s Comic Fan's excitement over a new car line by Kenner. They've brought back Rat Fink. Yes, Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's lovable motor maniacs are back, and Kenner's got a bit list of collectable cars to celebrate. And as if that weren't cool enough, watch for a TV special in the late summer...

And let's face it, what would a trip to Toy Fair be without a trip to Hasbro? G.I. Joe is still going strong this year, with the triumphant return of toys that actually shoot their missiles. (I still remember when that stupid kid shot a little red missile the size of a Flintstones vitamin down his own throat from a Battlestar Galactica toy, choked to death, and every parents group in the world became convinced that all kids were that stupid.) A new Cobra Leader, The Overlord, was introduced, as well as a new splinter group, Sky Patrol, who come with really neat mylar parachutes. One interesting change this year is that fewer vehicles come with their own drivers. Considering that many collectors will buy vehicles solely for the figure, I'm not sure how good a move that will be. One thing that will be a good move is the plan for a live-action G.I. Joe film in the near future.

--Vinnie Bartilucci

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#### QUESTION:

People lie about their ages. How will we be able to identify people who choose not to wear blue collars on their even age work years and how could we put these people to work?

#### ANSWER:

A tattoo mark on the forehead such as E6 would indicate that persons should be in the work force for a year beginning in June of their even age years between 20 and 60

The odd age people would all be equipped with baseball bats to keep them honest and insure their own full pay year's vacation. Send S.A.S.E. to: ODD or EVEN - Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN - OHIO, 44504 \*\*\*\*\*

Congrats to Tom on his new job!

## Transitory

by Sergio Taubmann

(If a person is loved too much at the moment of death, he/she becomes a resident of "Transitory", a state of metaphysical hold. That person's soul never goes on to his/her reward; they just go from body to body and live out the last moments of their lives repeatedly. One man has been in Transitory for years, ever since a bomb in a building he was in went off. Now he is slowly going mad and, in the body of a young black boy, is determined to ask the source of his misery — his wife — to release him. On his mission, the Transient is attacked by a group of prejudiced white boys...)

I ache when I wake up. For a change, I find myself alive. The owner's wife is presently keeping watch over me. I marvel at how something that thin can still look so healthy. I mean and slowly rise from the couch. The room -- apparently behind the store counter -- smells of dust and bubble gum.

"You okay?" the owner's wife asks. She still retains a touch of her Old World accent.

"Yeah," I say, knowing full well that I'll be in agony for a week (if I'm lucky). I manage to get up, except an offered glass of water and leave.

"Maybe you better stay away," the owner tells me in parting. "Those boys really hate you."

My mind is elsewhere by then. If these were just the preliminaries, I'm not looking forward to what my host has waiting for him down the line. I decide the best thing to do is to get this over with. The fact that I survived could be a sign. I take it as such. You get your hope where you can.

The phone book divulges a faded address. My professional training included enough of a knowledge of the city to know where I'm going. My host will seem out of place, but my desire for freedom overcomes my senses. The constant repetition of life and death seems to have dampened my ability to think linearly.

The trip takes three trains. The last is the best, as it doesn't have the acrid smell of urine and unwashed wins. It also had the most interesting mix of passengers. The cashmeres and the trenchcoats try to avoid looking at me. The demons do the opposite; their frank stares are challenges hoping to be picked up. One old woman seems to have pity for me. I take it as pity for my lifestyle, even though I know it's for my appearance.

I come out in a midafternoon light. The sky has the battleship grey color that always precedes a New York storm. The shadows are beginning to lengthen. Somewhere behind me, the jack-in-the-box chiming of Mr. Softie reminds me that spring is arriving. The wide expanse of Queens Boulevard stretches before me. I run across the street in fits and starts, always waiting for an opening before proceeding.

Doris lives in Forest Hills these days, a sign that my insurance money was well-spent. There's more green on one block than there is for miles in Manhattan.

I find Doris' street -- Aacan -- with little difficulty. I don't bother asking for directions. The majority of the residents won't talk to a skinny, mean-looking black kid, particularly one who looks like Hell after the scuffle with Rad's boys. My jacket is gray with dirt, and one knee of my jeans is ripped clean through. Add that to a collection of purpling bruises and scabs, and the picture is pretty bleak, trustwise.

Once you head away from the main roads, Forest Hills is abnormally quiet. It makes me nervous. Occasionally a car comes up the street, but it does so in a slow crawl. The houses all look alike: red brickface, picture windows, white stone stoops. The lawns are already beginning to grow in. A few along the street have just been mown. The fresh smell, chlorophyll and pollen, fills my nostrils. I wish I could have shared in this. Hell, if I'm unsuccessful, I might.

Doris' house has a stone stableboy on its lawn. The sloppy pink paint job doesn't hide its formerly coal black skin. I'm not surprised. Time has a talent for standing still around here. I reach under the ex-Golly's base and feel around for the Holy Grail. When we lived in the city, Doris used to keep it under the umbrella stand. With no stand in sight, I naturally go for the nearest analog.

My next choice is the stoop railing. No such luck, but a loose brick in the middle step draws my attention. It's taped underneath the offending masonry, caked with dried cement. I grab the key and wipe the grit off my jeans. It makes a pastel smear along the right side. I look around to make sure nobody's watching and then go in.

It's there that reality hits me like a piledriver.

The place is undeniably a step-up from our co-op, with its bugs and water problems. Her imprint is still on every detail. The reminders hang in the air like malicious spirits. Paintings hang in the living room, portraits she commissioned a few years before I was torn apart, before the blast forced me into this existence. I examine everything carefully, wondering if I loved her enough to keep her in Transitory if she had died before me.

I don't like the answer.

I head for the kitchen. The copper molds still hang there, gifts I had given that she never used. The refrigerator is new, smaller and well-stocked. I help myself to some lunch meat (chicken, olive loaf) and a glass of milk. The clock says I have at least two hours to kill before Doris gets home. The kids are still young, not able to take care of themselves. They still need their mother to watch over them. If I'm lucky, I can talk to her then. If I'm lucky, I can get release.

I decide to explore her domain, get an idea of what life would've been like if I didn't walk into that nova of pain. There's not much to explore. It's not a large house by any stretch of the imagination. The basement has been split in half. The far side is where the kids sleep, judging by the posters of robots and heroes. Plastic action figures are scattered all over the floor. Some of them have been chewed on. One forlorn

Spider-Man has to do without legs. I pick it up and turn it over in my hands. I missed a lot by traveling. I try to balance Spider-Man on a shelf before going back upstairs. The doll wobbles before settling onto its space.

I know where I'm going now. I have to see her room before she comes home. I have to see what I've been living for.

It's painted in a warm beige, inoffensive and friendly at the same time. The furniture is getting old; she hasn't dusted in a while. A patchwork comforter makes the bed appear larger than it should be. With or without it, it would still appear too large for her alone. Large fluffy pillows, matching the walls, are neatly placed against the black lacquer headboard. There's a compartment on either side. I climb onto the bed and go through them. It's a small catalogue of mundane experiences: photo albums, a plastic change purse, a wallet filled with coupons. Her books are all standard fare, the latest paperback bestsellers mixed in with the kind of tomes you were told were great literature. A few tissues, wadded up and used, end up in a corner.

I linger a bit too long on the photo album -- fascination with my own history, I guess. My first impulse is to open it. But opening it would open up too many wounds, causing me to bleed with imaginary stigmata. I get as far as lifting the cover on inch before slamming it shut and putting it back. I shift her belongings around to hide the album, hoping camouflage will equal non-existence.

Besides, the reason why I'm here is in plain sight. The shrine is right below the television set. There are seven photos in all, presented in mahogany frames and immaculately polished. There I am, in a body I recognize for a change, frozen in time at key points in my life. There I am graduating -- fifth in my class. There is our wedding picture. Lying in front of it is the only aberration: a newspaper clipping. As I approach it, I know what it's about. Somewhere in the back of my host's head, his original mind panics. He doesn't want to see what's written there; he doesn't want all the stories his grammar told him confirmed in some clipping from the *Ast*.

To be fair, the clipping's from the *Ast*:s. Doris has had it laminated -- a death's head moth in high-tech amber. No matter what the paper, I know the story by heart.

They put my effigy on the top of page three this time, a duplicate of the sixth photo in the shrine. I display my new badge proudly for the camera. The description of how the gunman caused the explosion is surprisingly dry for a paper like the *Ast*:s, almost without imagination. I crumple it up in my hand. The plastic prevents it from making any sound. In fact, after I relax my muscles, the clipping folds out slowly. No damage has been caused.

"Hold it right there," she says. I know I won't hold it. I couldn't if I wanted to. I couldn't even if I was sane and alive.

I turn. Doris is older. I expected that. She's hiding her fear well. The new lines accentuate the planes of her face. The auburn in her hair has been lightened by strands of soft, pastel grey. Other than that, she's unchanged.

I can see by the way she holds that .38 that she still keeps up the target shooting I mistook she do.

I drop the clipping and turn to face her. "Doris," I say, my host's accent making it sound like two distinct words.

"You're the creep on the phone, aren't you?" she asks, astonished at my affrontery. Her body has tensed. She's truly frightened, doesn't understand why this whippet of a kid is calling her by her Christian name. I take a step towards her in the hopes of comforting her, but it only causes her to tighten her grip on the pistol. "Don't move, goddamn it, or I'll shoot! My husband is a cop!"

"I know," I say.

"Why aren't I surprised? Do not move. I'm calling the police." She edges toward the nightstand and the princess phone. "How dare you make obscene calls to me, break into my house? I'll see you get put straight, kid."

"Doris," I say to her, sincerely. I don't even realize how patently absurd the scene is. What can I do to make her believe that this little ghetto kid is really her husband? That she has to stop loving me if I'm to get some rest? The rational side of me is whispering in my ear, telling me how ludicrous this is, how I should let her call the police so I can live another day.

I hear the click of her gun's safety.

"Doris, it's me. This has got to stop. I'm going mad enduring this."

She looks at me as if I'm a lunatic. Her assessment is correct, of course. "You're nuts, aren't you?"

"You have to accept it. I'm dead. You're keeping me down here, and every time I think it's the last time I end up here again. I can't stand this cycle of death and rebirth any more." I take another few steps. She drops the phone and aims straight for my heart. "I'm tired. I want to move on. Please let me."

I take another step.

Her cool face is melting away, the facade of control breaking away. I step on something hard and brittle. It shatters into a million tiny granules. I see her flinch from the sound.

"Don't move!" she screams, the words almost unintelligible.

"I'm dead, Doris! Accept it! Let me go on. Let yourself go on with your life!" I shout in a voice too small for me.

I take another step.

The smell of cordite blossoms in the room at the same moment that I feel the pain in my chest. I stumble backwards, falling onto the bed. The pain spreads out along my body, followed by a numbness I once would have found soothing. I hear my wife sobbing hysterically. I like to think the sobs are for me, but I know they're not.

As I ebb back into the sanctuary I prepare myself for the next death. I realize I've got a long trip before I rest.

# A TASTE OF PALP

by Dale A. White

Peter Palp's tongue was so long he had to sling it over his shoulder to keep it out of his way. It slapped his back as he walked, as if it were a hooked fish thrashing against the side of a boat. And it salivated on his shirt, leaving what resembled a huge sweat stain.

If it hadn't been for his tongue, Peter would have been a handsome young man. With it, however, he resembled a goofy Adonis. Encountering him was like viewing a Greek statue of the ideal man only to find it vandalized by a Warner Brothers cartoonist.

Several times each day, Peter wished he didn't have such a long tongue. "Ah wish Ah thidn't haft thutch a lung tung," he said. "Ah weally woo."

One afternoon, he told his mother this as they strolled through the park.

"Now, Peter," she consoled him, "I think you have a lovely tongue." She stopped at a street vendor's cart to purchase him a treat, hoping to divert his attention from his deformity.

Yet Peter told his mother that everyone made fun of his tongue. "Mudder, ebbybudy mates fund ob my tung."

"They're just jealous," his mother said. "Now, be a good boy and eat your ice cream." She handed him a cone with a dozen scoops.

The top scoop slid off. A dog, with its tongue uncurled, pounced with the intent to snatch the falling glob of butter pecan. Peter, however, caught the scoop before it could hit the ground and reeled it in. The dog, which had heretofore taken pride in its swiftness as a scavenger, was surprised to find itself biting its own tongue as it watched the descending ice cream suddenly reverse its course.

"If only other people realized what advantages there are in having a long tongue," Peter's mother said, "they'd all want one."

Other people, however, did not:

At the hospital where Peter was born, other mothers had cringed at the sight of him as an infant. "If I had to breastfeed that child, I'd shrivel up and die," one observer had gasped in horror as she protectively covered her bosom with her bathrobe.

At school, the girls shrieked when Peter passed by. "Imagine getting French-kissed by Peter Palp," they squealed. "Yuk. Gross. Ick. Poo. Double yuk."

At church, the minister tended to stumble over the scriptures when he noticed Peter in the congregation. "And they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other ton—uh, other—well, they were spooked, I guess."

Peter believed other people's assessments were correct. A long tongue was a disadvantage.

At the beach, Peter had to cover his tongue with a tube sock to guard it from sunburn. In department stores, he couldn't try on clothing without wetting the fabric. On the phys-ed field, he couldn't swing a bat without slapping the ball first with his—well, you know.

His speech impediment especially hurt him, for he enjoyed nothing more than words. He listened enviously to the rhythm of others' dialogues. The sight of a phonics card brought him to tears. If only he could recite, enunciate, alliterate without sounding like Elmer Fudd after dental surgery.

Peter had thoroughly studied the tongue. He'd memorized the schematic drawings in the medical textbooks, which exposed the interior of that muscular organ as if they were presenting a diagram of a slice of lasagna. He knew all the layers of papilla, taste buds and mucous glands. And he knew that, just as the thumb had given man the ability to make tools, the tongue had given him the ability to use language. Having evolved into the proper size and shape, the tongue had become one of those physical attributes that separated man from the animals.

"But Ah yam nut an nahimal," Peter told himself. He had feelings, damn it. He had a voice of his own.

And he was going to make the world listen, whether it wanted to or not.

For years, Peter struggled as a poet. If Beethoven composed music without hearing a note, if Toulouse-Lautrec painted large canvases while standing on stumpy legs, then Peter believed he could write without being able to speak articulately. After all, the ear was what appreciated the beauty of a lyrical line. Peter's audience only had to read to hear his verse ringing through their brains. Paper could be his podium. Ink could be his voice. The effect would be the same, if not better.

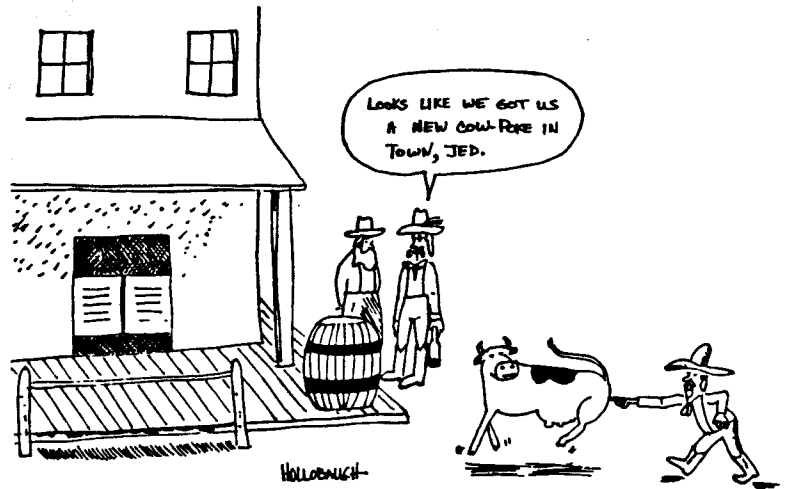
Eventually, an editor at a literary magazine picked up a submission from Peter Palp and heard the young writer's voice singing in his ear: "Wat thounds wite (What sounds right)/un wat thounds wung (And what sounds wrong)/Maddahs noit (Matters not)/Wun down diffthong (One damn diphthong)."

The editor slapped his head several times to exorcise Peter's voice. Reading Palp was like listening to a troubadour who'd just swallowed a fistful of Quaaludes. This wasn't just dribble, it was syllabic slush.

He liked it.

Just as Chaucer had set new standards for English pronunciation and spelling in his day, perhaps Palp was, with his own sense of farce, trying to accomplish a similar stylistic leap. Palp was trying to reach hundreds, if not thousands, of people whose dialectic differences had excluded them from mainstream poetics. Palp was speaking the universal language, infantile babbling.

"He's a genius," the editor acclaimed.



Peter's work found a select but impressive following. Universities published his chapbooks. Palpian scholars debated the subtleties and complexities of what they believed to be his message. Graduate students impressed each other at parties by quoting Peter's famous "MOUFPEETH GWANDEE (Mouthpiece Grande)":

"Kat gut me tung (Cat got my tongue)/ Leg go, leg go (Let go, let go)/Koff up 'airball (Cough up hairball)/Leg go, leg go/Moufpeeth Grande (Mouthpiece Grande)/Take about 'ung! (Talk about. hung!)/Kowassal-big oogan (Colossal-big oryan)/Kat gut me tung."

As an exercise in their craft, linguists translated popular poems into the Palpian tongue. One such revision was used to open an international forum on Palpian aesthetics: "TWEES" by Joyce Kilmer: "A dink dat Ah she neber thee/A pum as wubley as a twee,/ A twee woose wungwee mouf es pressed/'Gainst thee urth's thweet, fowing breast."

Palp's fans yearned to meet their reclusive mentor, who had consistently refused to let his photograph appear on his books. Several decades passed. Nearing death, Peter finally decided to show himself.

At the 50th Annual Symposium on Palpian Studies, Peter walked on stage. The audience gasped as he pulled his tongue from over his shoulder and let it flop onto the lectern. People in the front row wrung saliva out of their fashionable attire. An embarrassing silence filled the auditorium.

Although his tongue was hanging out as usual, Peter managed to appear even more stunned than the crowd. His eyes became as big as headlights as he saw, for the first time, the people who comprised his reading public.

All of them, every one, had ears the size of angels' wings.

The slightest draft caused their enormous tabs of flesh and fibrocartilage to flap like window shutters. The rims on their ears were as thick as those on car wheels. The lobes were as plump as pillows. The auditory canals were as dark and deep as wishing wells. Facing this audience was like staring at three thousand MAD Magazine covers.

He liked it.

Overcome, Peter decided to scrap the speech he'd prepared and to ad lib instead. A tear dripped down his cheek as he paraphrased a line from Shakespeare: "Fwends, Womans, kuntweemen, dank yu so bery much fo wending me yur ears."

The applause was deafening.



# SURF'S UP

by Paul Creighton

It was simply another mundane morning in southern California. The endless miles of gridiron were clogged with traffic snaking into the distance. The faithful opaque blanket of smog descended onto Los Angeles like a dog performing some familiar trick; nice boy, that's a good dog. Sunset Boulevard was awash with tourists eager to glimpse stars furtively creeping from the bluffs of Beverly Hills. Rodeo Drive pulsed to its own bourgeois beat. Hollywood was at work fulfilling its obligation to the public. Yes, for this eclectic mix of urban sprawl, it was another day, another unmeasurable amount of dollars. Or so it was for everyone except our hero, Harold Whillybull III.

When the news of the undersea earthquake and subsequent 200-foot wall of water bellowed from the radio, Harold became as nervous as a bull in a china shop. This was indeed unfortunate, as our hero currently stood inside Madame Wong's House of Fina China. The wave, racing at a speed of 400 miles an hour, was destined to transform coastal L.A. into a giant underwater theme park. Harold envisioned this cataclysm as the wrath of God. In his spasm of trepidation, he promptly proceeded to relinquish his hold on the hand-crafted ornamental vase he had been perusing. It crashed to the floor, exploding into a sea of fragments.

The proprietress, Madame Wong, raced toward him shouting a variety of rather unpleasant expletives. Fortunately, Harold did not understand Chinese, as he was presently being likened to the posterior of an animal that serves as a beast of burden in much of rural China. Madame Wong shook Harold like a ragdoll. "How dare you break vase...." more characterisations in Chinese, "you a pay, you a pay!"

Harold did not quite know what to make of the situation. After all, the House of Fina China was smack-dab in the heart of coastal Santa Monica. Surely the Chinawoman had heard the special news bulletin only moments ago. Madame Wong stood to lose quite a bit more than one hand-crafted ornamental vase. His miscue would look ridiculous compared to the towering surge's treatment of the dinervare.

"Haven't you heard what is going to happen?"

"You a pay for vase," replied Madame Wong. "Have business to run."

"Okay, okay, I'll pay for the vase," Harold responded. His concern stood not with such a trifling matter. "Surely you're going to evacuate, aren't you?" Harold eyed her with increasing amusement. He was astounded the old Chinese woman had not once mentioned the crisis. The customers returned their attention to the shelves.

Again the response: "Pay for vase. Madame Wong busy. Big sale in shop. Must get back to work. Now, pay for vase. Use major credit card if want to."

Harold could not believe what he was hearing. Perhaps the doctor had actually been correct in his perceptions of Harold's ear wax problems. How could the old lady remain in the shop when it was to be annihilated in three hours? The approaching juggernaut would strike with the fury of thousands of bombs. Anything in its path would be tossed aside like an unwanted toy, be it Madame Wong, her shop, or her collection of fine Oriental giftware. The old woman was simply senile, he concluded, but the conversation in the shop betrayed his conviction.

"Well, Bobby, do you want to catch an afternoon movie?"

From another: "Now dear, stop looking around. We have to go, otherwise we'll miss the beach party at the Hendersons'. You know the director will be there. I heard he's bringing some of the cast."

After reimbursing the old woman for the shattered vase, Harold strode rapidly out of the shop. Perhaps he had misunderstood the intentions of those remaining inside. Certainly they could not be

so foolish as to linger in an area that all but would not exist in a few hours. Harold had read of this behaviour in one of those magazines in the dentist's office; it was that conflict avoidance something-or-other theory. However, once recognising the peril of not acting, the group would be racing home to gather family before seeking the safety of higher ground.

Outside, Harold spotted a postman on his rounds. He raced off in the direction of the civil servant. What on earth was this man still doing on his route? Neither rain nor snow was one thing, but neither 200-foot wall of water?

"Hey, haven't you heard of the tidal wave that's due here in a few hours?" warned Harold.

"Why, sure I have." The mail carrier appeared impatient. "Listen here, I really don't have time to chat. I want to finish early today 'cause there's a big underwear sale at the mall today. If I get there too late, they'll be sold out of my size again. I always get stuck with underwear that's too big; a sale's still a sale. I don't want big underwear this time; kinda looks like a circus tent around my waist, know what I mean?" He chuckled briefly before continuing his rounds.

Harold employed the age-old technique used to rattle those dreaming individuals back to the conscious world, the slap. The red marks on his arm reminded him he was not in the world of slumber. He would go home, grab a few possessions and get the hell out of here. The radio station ahead, however, reminded him of his civic duty. He would go in and make sure more warnings were being broadcast.

Inside, the station was abuzz with life. Harold navigated the confines of the office until he arrived at the programme director's desk. The man was leafing through a magazine, pausing only momentarily to glance up at Harold. "Can I help you?" he inquired before returning his attention to the magazine.

"Yes sir. Now, I know you have heard about the tidal wave that's due to hit here in a couple of hours." Harold paused to study the man's visage for any signs of concern; to his dismay, the programme director was more interested in the latest music news. Harold raised his voice. "You must go on the air and broadcast information! What about the evacuation plan? What about the latest bulletins? What—"

"Look, man," interjected the programme director, "all we play here are, like, the latest rock'n'roll tunes, okay? This is ESON you're talkin' about, nonstop tunes from eight in the morning till six at night. Man, like we don't even break for commercials, let alone weather bulletins. Nobody wants to hear that stuff, 'cause it's booo-ring." He turned back to his music magazine as if he expected Harold to leave.

If this were a cartoon, Harold's jaw would have hit the floor. His eyes would have turned into tiny squares. Giant multicoloured question marks would appear over his head. He stood speechless as the programme director flipped through the magazine. Any moment now someone would jump out from under the desk and tell him he was on that hidden camera show. Everyone would laugh awhile, hahaha, and Harold would win a fabulous weekend for two in Las Vegas. These guys sure were going to elaborate lengths to set up gags nowadays. Harold stood waiting for the inevitable end to this prank. He waited and waited.

"Look buddy, you got some kind of problem?" the programme director inquired from behind his magazine. "I don't know what you want, but whatever it is we're not interested, so why don't you take a flying leap out of here before I call the cops?"

Harold shuffled out. He glanced at the people on the boulevard. Not one showed any signs of panic. What on earth was going on? He glimpsed a patrol car parked off in an alley and approached the officer inside hesitantly, wondering if he could provide evacuation information, or if he too was oblivious to the news.

As he drew near, Harold discerned a weather bulletin coming from the patrol car. The report discussed the earthquake and the rapidly-nearing wave of epic proportions. However, the broadcast was interrupted by the officer's selection of a new station: "This is ESON, home of nonstop music on the coast..."

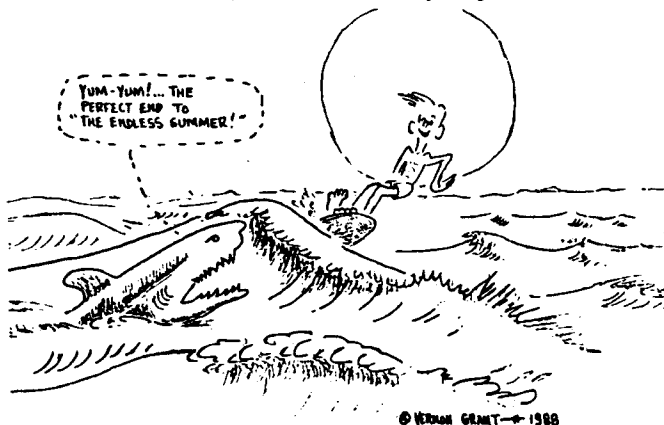
The lawman dunked his doughnut into a cup of steaming coffee. He smiled briefly at Harold. "Good morning."

"Excuse me, officer, didn't you hear the radio report about the earthquake and—"

"Sure did," the officer interrupted, dunk dunk dunk, "but music makes the world go 'round."

There comes a point in the human mind when, quite simply, the brain goes on strike, protesting an overload of information it does not know how to process. The mind travels a path based on its perceptions of the credible. When the final strands of rationality melt away, science has devised a myriad of terms, all masked in obscure jargon, to describe this situation. The layman opts for more familiar terms: "bonkers," "screw loose" or the universal term "nuts." Yes, at this point of information overload, Harold's poor brain was pushing peanut butter status. Thoughts of danger melted away into a crunchy sea of insanity. He left the policeman and strolled to the beach, humming to himself, Jack and Jill went up the hill...

The ocean of peanut butter had not obscured Harold's ability to register certain nonthreatening stimuli...to fetch a pail of water...The surfers were awash with excitement...Jack fell down...Seems some killer surf was coming...and broke his crown...They waxed their boards in anticipation...and Jill, poor Jill...As they made their way toward the frothing sea, Harold screamed shrilly, "Last one in's a rotten egg!...came tumbling after."



SOURCE OF SALT  
by Bangor Zack Bullen  
Perhaps he told the truth,  
Perhaps he lied;  
But I haven't enjoyed my soup  
Since Rajneesh died!



## GROUP NON-CONFORMSTERBATING

by David Gunzenhauser

At school we have a place called the Bell Tower. This is where the students get to hang out when the weather permits. This is also where I was introduced to a world that separates conformity from an experience that lasts as long as you participate. This uncontrollable force can only be defined as Hacking, the magic of the Hacky-Sack.

It will usually start out with two guys Hacking back and forth. Within 5-10 minutes there will be about ten of the most varied people sharing an experience that doesn't have a social tie.

I spend a couple hours a day Hacking, and I don't think I have seen more than three people in the circle who lived the same lifestyle. These guys and girls will come and go, and for the most part go through a metamorphosis; coming into the new dimension, and exiting without a slight hesitation.

The people. They go from the tie-dyers to the athletes, from the conservative to the liberal, and anything in between. When a Hacker is in the circle he/she knows nothing about conforming to the social strains in which his/her "everyday" peers take part, and wondering all the time why they do that "stupid stuff" with THOSE PEOPLE (my god, they're contagious). At the same time, they will not admit that the real reason they don't join our world is because they cannot Hack and they don't want to be seen trying something that they don't know how to do.

The funny thing is, there are absolutely no candidates of whom I know who were born with the coordination that it takes to Hack. Some of the people in the circle are un-fucking-believable, to say the least. Then there are those who will probably never be able to do a "Foot Stall." But what makes the magic work is the basic unwritten code of ethics which says the hack circle is a place of serenity—no stress, no insults (unless in jest of course) and, most importantly, not one person is conforming to any social position outside the circle.

Just as a warning, I think that I should give a few pointers on the circle at the Bell Tower, in case you decide to hop in for a trip to the farthest beyond. That is, I will hint on some of the key terms and rules. If you see someone kicking the hack more than four times to him/herself, he/she is known to be hacksterbating. If you kick the hack to someone and they cannot return it because they were not paying attention, that is called gelling. If you throw the hack up with any part of your body to start a hack, and you are the first person to kick it then forth, that is self-hacking. Self-hacking has a penalty, a hack pelting. This is having the authority to throw the hack as hard as you please at the person who self-hacked. And never say the "s" word, sorry. If you botch up a hack, say anything except the word "Sorry." This too will result in a hack pelting. This list goes on, and consistently changes and grows throughout the course of a hack session.

Not all the questions of the world can be equated, and for the most part should be left alone. Hacking is not an excuse to cut class; it is, though, an emotionally manifesting concept that equals and balances the minds of those who have succumbed to conforming to what has been dictated to them throughout their lives.

## IN SEARCH OF...

by Richard M. Millard

What a night! Brad and Jocelyn were aglow with excitement as they tooled down the deserted road in their BMW.

After all, they'd started the evening with front-row seats at the SRO concert of Timpani Triumphant from Thailand at Monty's Half-Shell on the Lake.

And then they jaunted over to the Palace where they tastefully gyrated to the balanced tones of the Up With Everybody singers.

The night was capped by soy cakes and wine at Alfredo's, including several trips to Alfredo's world-renowned poolside pasta bar.

(continued next column)

Jocelyn couldn't want to make all the girls envious at the spa.

And Brad would regale the less fortunate with tales at his racquetball club.

It had been a simply perfect evening.

But then, fate stepped in.

A bright ball of light shot across the night sky!

Brad and Jocelyn thought it was a shooting star, and immediately wishes for higher Dow Jones averages.

The BMW rounded a curve in the road, and suddenly screeched to a halt!

There, hovering in front of them, nearly as big as a condo, was a brilliantly pulsating craft. Yes, a spaceship!

A ramp slid out from the ship, and a bulbous, three-eyed grayish-green creature with numerous tentacles slithered down the ramp to the road.

The creature raised one of its tentacles and pointed it at the idling BMW. A loud humming sound filled the air for several seconds.

Jocelyn's face was still wrinkled up in an expression of distaste for the creature's color when she was blasted out of existence.

Brad stared blankly at the creature as another bolt of light flew from the tentacle. Just before he literally went up in smoke, Brad hoped that the interior wouldn't be too badly damaged.

With drooping eyes, the creature slithered back into the craft. The ramp was retracted, and the ship took off into the night sky.

The BMW continued to idle on the road below, a faint burning smell about it.

While, inside the spaceship, the grayish-green creature's three eyes were still drooping as it sadly deleted the planet Earth from its chart of worlds where intelligent life was suspected.

## HAVING FUN

by Floyd R. Leavitt

Direct sun rays blistered his lips. His face, arms and bare legs would soon follow. He thought of something funny and laughed. Blood oozed from his lips as they cracked. He winced, groaned and touched them tenderly. "I'm going to die," he despaired, "way out here in the middle of the desert, I'm going to die."

Weariness blurred his senses. He leaned on a cactus and sighed. Sweat rolled down his forehead. Not more than a hundred yards away something attracted his attention. He focused. Amazing, simply amazing, way out here was a sign that, when his vision cleared, read CANTINA.

He pushed through the door, shoved a wicker chair out of his way, strode to the bar and demanded, "Give me a 7-Up."

The bartender laughed as he polished one of the many dusty shotglasses and slid it down the bar to his lone customer. "That was funny, Señor, you are a funny man. Can you tell another?"

"Only when I'm having fun," he said and smiled slow.

The bartender wiped the bar in circular motions with his dirty apron. His jet black hair pulled back across his head shone against the dim streaks of sunlight through the ceiling. A broad smile unveiled a yellow row of jagged teeth. "And are you having fun?" he asked.

"Yes," the man contemplated. "I think that I am." He studied a thick crack in the mirror which backed a row of whiskey and tequila bottles.

The bartender stepped to the end of the bar and slid the ice chest lid back. He reached deep into the half-melted chunks of ice and withdrew a dripping can of 7-Up. "I think that I am having fun also," he said.

The ceiling fan creaked and wobbled as the man drank his 7-Up, one shotglass at a time. Memories crossed his mind which brought tranquility to his hardened countenance: a girl, his mother and sister. "Where's Ajo?" he asked.

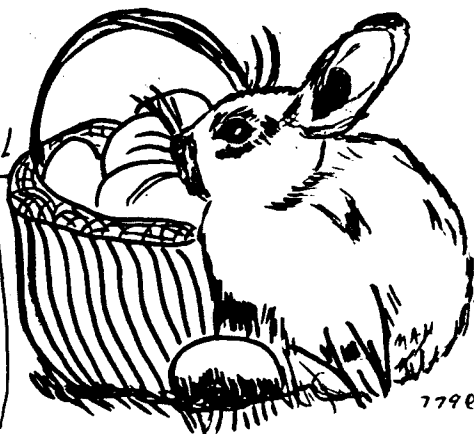
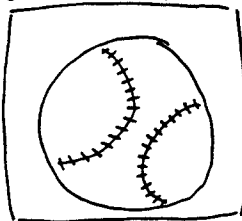
"A hundred and twenty miles to the north," the bartender answered. "You are having fun, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," the man said. He tipped the bartender and left as mysteriously as he had appeared.



In honor of  
the Season-  
yet-to-be  
**KNOW YOUR BASEBALL**

**GENUINE BASEBALL**



MARY ANN HENN

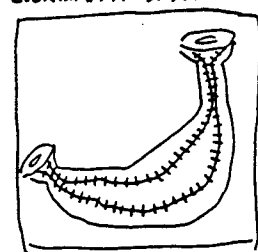
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**PETER COTTON-TAILASAUROS**

by A.T. Hunn

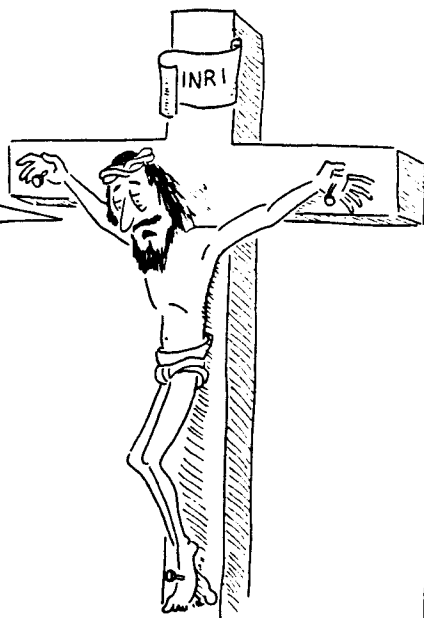
Hippity-hoppity, "Look out, Jack!"  
Peter Cotton-tailasaurus  
He's comin' back  
Clomp! Clomp!  
Dino-bunny is on his waaayyyyyy  
Givin' out fossils, mesozoic goo  
He'll demolish your house  
If you ask for tofu  
So hold your basket high for  
Peter Cotton-tailasaurus

**COUNTERFEIT BASEBALL**



WABACHOGAN

I'M SORRY DOROTHY,  
YOU'RE GOING TO  
HAVE TO FIND KANSAS  
ON YOUR OWN



## THEOLOGY AND POLITICS

by B.Z. Bullen

In a voice like thunder, the preacher roared:

"I am right! You, beloved friends out there in the darkness, are so, so wrong! God will punish you unless you do what I tell you!

"My authority comes from the Bible--which I know how to read better than you!

"Beloved friends! Hear me speak! Three thousand religions in the world today! Damnable doctrines! Doctrines of devils! The devil, through these false prophets, has got the people going to hell, and enjoying the trip!

"America--today--is the frolic ground of the devil! Hear me speak!

"Nothing is right but what I preach! I am right!

And you are wrong!"

Congrats to Annie on her  
bookstore!

## SATAN IS DEAD

by Elliot Cantsins

I went to the Sabbath at the temple yesterday as usual. The alter girls were cute with their bare asses showing below their surplices. The priest guzzled vodka from the chalice and called it Our Lord's damned blood. We had a missionary this time. He gave a wicked sermon. He had come from Latin America to collect alms to support his continuing evil work down there. But he was bad. He didn't just appeal to our lack of conscience and guilt feeling in a manipulative way. He started out really philosophical, giving one hell of a fire-and-brimstone sermon about our lack of values as Satanists before hitting us in our wallets about our responsibility to spread our filth throughout the world.

"In the beginning was the Lord!" he thundered. "Our precious bodies were given to us by Our Lord Satan in order that we might enjoy this beautiful world He has placed us in. But what do we do? Do we go out there into that beautiful world and have one hell of a time enjoying one another? No, we sit at our desks on our fat, lazy asses, and get flabby and out of shape. Do we enjoy the beautiful world, and add to its beauty in everything we do and make, as Our Lord Satan intended? No, we pollute Satan's evil earth, and make everything we do and make as tacky and as sickeningly righteous as possible. Is that what Satan put us here for? Life is a beautiful gift, but life is short: Let us not waste the precious time given us acting like pious assholes."

"I have just come from my damned work in Latin America. In El Salvador, in Nicaragua, every damn place I went those holy Christians were taking pot shot at me and telling me to go to hell. In Satan's bad time, brothers and sisters, in Satan's bad time."

"In the mountains of Peru, in the jungles of Brazil, in many out of the way places, I visited traditional communities, living in their traditional ways, honoring their traditional Gods: Satan worshippers all. It deeply inspired me to see them living their old-fashioned lives of evil, dedicated to Satan and His bad world, and I told them so, and encouraged them to carry on with their wicked ways and evil deeds. But the holy Christians continue to encroach everywhere, burning the jungles and selling cola on the unholy mountain tops dedicated to the Evil One, and building their churches and office buildings. Where will it end? Is there nothing we can do to prevent the holy Christians from using their bombs and their pollutants to bring on their apocalypse, when, it is said, our already hurried Lord Satan will be locked up for a thousand years. Would life be boring then or what?

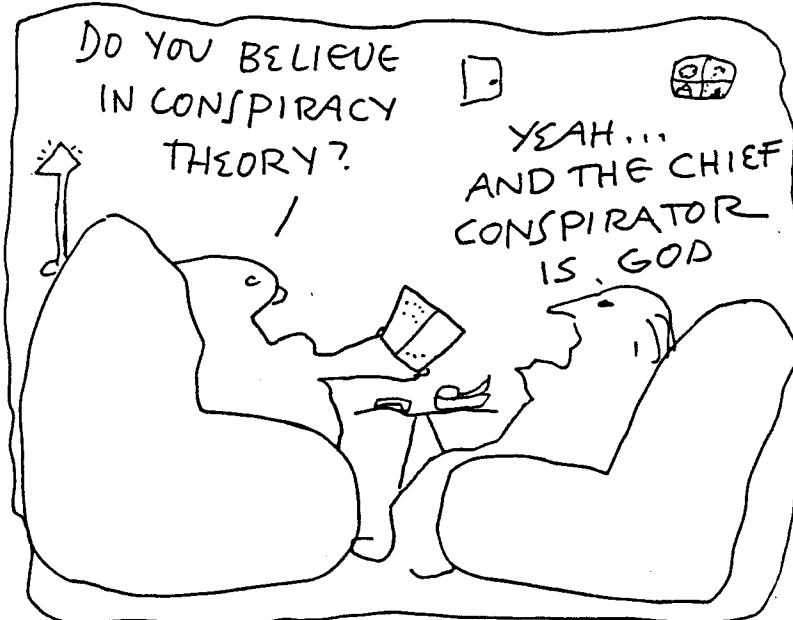
"I just don't understand these holy Christians. Mammon seems to be all they ever think about. Thank Satan that we here, all of us brothers and sisters, have received the false teaching, to wit, that we cannot serve both Satan and Mammon, that the sensual things of this world slip daily through our hands as we bodilessly pursue the medium of exchange."

"And so, brothers and sisters, dig deep into your pocketbooks, and find there the filthy lucre that will sustain me in my stinking work, promoting the life of sin, and perhaps one day we will be able to tear down this sanctimonious Christian world, and I'll be able to ride the airplanes for free!"

It was a beautiful, inspiring sermon, and a beautiful dream, and we all dug deep into our pockets and coughed up a lot of dough. But here it is Monday, and here I am back at the office, money grubbing and kowtowing as usual. Religion is the opiate of the people!

DO YOU BELIEVE  
IN CONSPIRACY  
THEORY?

YEAH...  
AND THE CHIEF  
CONSPIRATOR  
IS GOD



# SAGA OF THE SOUTH SLOPE

by Dennis Brezina

## CHAPTER 2 DOES NO EVER MEAN YES?

When we last left the South Slope, where animals and plants with human-like traits grapple with problems bigger than life, Give-a-Hoot, an owl, was restoring law and order to a drug-plagued community; Billy Joe, a burly bluejay, was lamenting the closing of the Pokeberry Saloon on Election Day; and Rodney, a nuthatch fledged from a topsy-turvy nest, had discovered that the secret to eternal youth was not arrested development...

Looking in today on our less-than-serene community we find Jasper, a batchelor rabbit, jumping up and exclaiming to his buddies, "Bunnies! Bunnies! I can't understand them. Whenever I chase after one, she'll race to the left, dodge to the right, stop dead in her tracks, turn around, face me with a broad grin and pummel me about the head and shoulders."

"Who knows," remarked Thomas, a toad, to his confused friend, "maybe that's her way of saying she likes you."

"That's nothing!" replied a praying mantis named Luther. "Courtship is a total puzzle to me. The day that mother and dad conceived me and my 523 brothers and sisters all was well, for a few moments, that is. Then, so I was told afterward, before you could shake a walking stick, Mom devoured Dad -- antennas, long legs and all."

"Did you father upset your mother?" asked the rabbit.

"Upset her? So what if he did? Mom didn't have to eat Dad alive. That's carrying the idea of 'Mother knows best' a bit too far," replied Luther.

The animals grew quiet. Then the toad showed them a couple of books in his book bag. They paged through Love Is Never Having to Say You're Hungry. It highlighted the amorous side of foraging for nuts and berries, but, unfortunately, shed no light on the eternal question, "When is no, no, and when is it yes?" They opened the other book, Chimmunks Who Love Too Much, written by the animal psychologist, Dr. Ivan Mallard. In Chimmunks Dr. Mallard analyzes the problem of what he calls "crazy glue" relationships. He points out that obsessive cuddlers have grown up in dysfunctional nests or burrows in which they get little parental nurturing. Tension in the home can be felt all the way across the meadow. The result? Well, the doctor concludes with a poetic warning:

"Too much mating

While the tomcat is waiting,

Can cost you a paw and a hind leg."

More confused and frustrated than ever, the group hopped over to the Fallen Oak Shopping Mall to hunt for any book that might help them. Excitedly, they laid their paws on the best seller, Out On a Limb Less Traveled, by Dr. Shirley Impeccable, famed actress turned psychiatrist. The book opens by underscoring the fun and excitement of self-help in this the age of therapy. It then explains that the dynamic of the human courting ritual involves neither the context of the situation, tone, inflection of voice, eye contact nor body language.

"Thankfully," Dr. Impeccable asserts, "all of the suspense in courtship is gone. This is an era of directness, candor and openness. Fair play prevails. Say what you have to say. Listen to the other person. And act accordingly. The author goes on to discuss that back in the old days when Greta Garbo uttered her classic line, "I want to be alone," the average Joe would have thought, and rightfully so, that Garbo didn't mean what she said at all. In fact, the last thing she wanted was to be alone. "Today," the author concludes, "there's a radical change in the chemistry of relationships. Whenever a Greta Garbo says she wants to be alone, leave her alone. Don't bug her. Go shopping at the mall. Or play a video game. No means no! Yes means yes! And that's that!"

Just then a bunny bounced by and clobbered Jasper on the nose. He toppled backwards. Shaking his head, he wondered, "Maybe Dr. Impeccable is right. Hmmm, but maybe not." Hesitantly, he joined his buddies and headed over to the Pokeberry Saloon for a round of refreshments and, in what would have pleased the good doctor, a video game or two.

**MORAL:** When leaving the battlefield of romance, it's safer to have the ring of freedom in your ears than in your nose.

## NIGHTINGALE?

by Robert Godwin

As each shot echoed off the walls of surrounding buildings, another figure dropped, 'til 16 bodies lay writhing on the concrete. Sixteen shots, sixteen bodies. Cries of agony mingled with cries of fear. What was happening? Why would anyone turn an afternoon stroll into a slaughter?

Suddenly a figure appeared, as if from nowhere, bending over first one then another victim. A quick examination, a tourniquet to stop the bleeding in the arm or leg--it was always an arm or leg--a shot of morphine for the pain, a word of consolation and encouragement, then on to the next victim. The nightingale seemingly had endless medical supplies in the

# LOVE THAT CITY

by Russel Like

All right, guys. I've had enough. And I think I am speaking for many others when I say this. It's time to start setting your movies somewhere else. Don't you people ever travel?

At least five of the last six movies I have seen were set in Los Angeles. Now I realize that all you film people live there, and the weather's pretty decent most of the time, even when you do have earthquakes, and maybe you like to breathe dirty air (and this coming from someone who lives in New Jersey!), and Los Angeles is close to Disneyland, and pretty far away from Idaho. I have never seen a movie set in Idaho. Perhaps there is something evil about Idaho. I don't know. This is because I don't know what it looks like, because I have never seen it. And if I don't see Idaho in a movie soon, my suspicions about that probably innocent state will fester until someday I exact my terrible revenge, in effigy, by molesting a potato. But anyway, I think that now maybe the film industry is mature enough for its favorite city to face some competition. Why don't you set a movie somewhere like, for example, Oklahoma City, Wyoming? Oh, excuse me. I just remembered that Oklahoma City is not in Wyoming. It's in Maryland, and is in fact that state's capital.

This mistake of mine is, I believe, indicative of the harm the film industry has inflicted upon the United States. During times such as ours, when the geographic knowledge of Americans is lamentable, the film industry refuses to show us more than one city. Meanwhile, it is clearly impossible for Americans to learn geography if it isn't provided in their video entertainment. Only my lightning intuition saved me from the heartbreak of improperly identifying state capitals several sentences ago. But most don't possess talents to equal mine. And if America's geographic ignorance isn't corrected, then national defense and the domestic soup industry will suffer.

I can think of two rather ugly reasons why you film people might want to film so much in Los Angeles. You might be afraid that your city will suffer in comparison with others and, having shown your own, are afraid to show others. Alternatively, since the film industry makes quiz game shows, where geography questions are frequently asked, you might want to make sure your contestants are geographic morons so you can give out fewer prizes. I am kicking myself now, because with my display of geographic acumen several paragraphs earlier I will never be allowed on a game show. I would just be too dangerous a contestant.

Well, that's about all I have time for now. I am going to watch some movies on videotape with some friends. Perhaps we will be swept up in a voyage of discovery as the characters find something new, like a charming little cafe in a remote corner of Los Angeles. Or maybe we will watch a travelogue, where the intrepid characters venture as far from home as, oh, say San Diego or Santa Barbara, or maybe even Palm Springs! At least you know that you will never have to even think about such horrible places as Scranton, Pennsylvania, or Gary, Indiana, when you watch a Hollywood production.

bag he carried. It was almost as if he had known the carnage would take place.

Quickly, the nightingale completed his rounds and vanished, leaving each victim resting comfortably awaiting the arrival of ambulances and police. Within an hour of the first shot, all 16 victims were safely in hospitals, the work of the nightingale being examined in amazement by emergency room physicians. They could not improve on it.

From a six-story window of a building overlooking the recent episode, a man surveyed the now-empty plaza as he dismantled and cleaned his rifle. A most pleasant afternoon. His marksmanship was perfect. No misses and no fatal hits. He had wounded them all and saved them all. First he maimed, then he healed. He didn't know which he enjoyed more.

# The Poet's Diet Book

(dedicated to D. Poole) by Tamarina Dwyer

Jan fixed hamburg crepes and set them in front of Henri like a waitress or son's mother. "The heartburger is the best," she said curtly, and walked through the spacious kitchen to the bathroom.

The bath was cluttered with towels and clothes, glass bowls and the flowers and plants of which Jan had always been so fond. *Oh sweet ivy and philodendron that lie/ find the flower that emotion will not entangle to die. here is the jade and the spider and cabbage, umbrella tree bonsai cacti and fern. Even if cocktail games and people are square/there's no damage to the plant that is fair.*

Jacques was on a business trip, so Henri and Jan ate the crepes, vegetable kabobs and warm fruit with whipped cream and six different kinds of nuts. They napped on waterbeds, and watched the shadows of raindrops as spring fell on earth like a foreshadowing of evil. It was gloom or government, wet or washed out.

Jan dreamed of Chuck and Kevin and Fred. They were riding bicycles in the sky like roguish ghosts unaffected by the clouds, knocking off the points of stars, parking near the moon for light and clarity.

Jan woke up at 3:15pm. Rich people had quiet apartments and she couldn't hear Rimsky on the second floor where Henri was checking his biorhythms on a computer. What Jan did see was her \$200 black turtleneck dress standing near the door waiting for her to—what? Put it on, talk to it, scream at it or shoot it?...There were mirrored columns in the bedroom, and Jan glimpsed herself in one of them like a secretary before a typing test. The reality of illusion was a fact of reflection. She had forgotten to hang up the dress. Her velvet caftan was too warm. She got up and plugged in the air conditioner. She walked around the room like an apparition herself. Thinned-out like a soup, willing gambler of medical theory and advice.

Jan glared at her dress. How did you reprimand a piece of clothing? She walked to the intercom defiantly and spoke to Henri. "The devil is dead," Henri told her.

Jan was brave now, and reached for the dress like an arm for a sleeve or a coat for a back. It complied. She hung it in the closet next to a white satin blouse. She wanted to swim, and there was no time for hallucinations.

Jan put on an x-shaped one-piece suit and took the elevator to the pool. She swam forty laps and dreamed of Jacques' husky voice and hairy chest. She watched the black turtleneck dress circle the pool like a sentry of the ridiculous or death's grim reaper. It was her diet, she reasoned, and swam another ten laps.

After a sauna and shower, she rested on the waterbed. Henri wanted to give her a massage but she resisted. Jan knew who she was.

Dinner at the Froggery was the plan, and Jan got up to dress at 7:30. Apparently the black dress was still exercising. "Henri!" she demanded. "What is happening here?"

He brought a crepe sailor dress from Jacques' closet, which made the day complete.

"From Jacques' closet?" she began to mutter again. "It's a nice dress!" Henri insisted.

It was too big, and Jan fixed the triangle cliveburger and toasted to spring, a lilac bush crowding the vision of the black turtleneck that stood near the door like a soldier...

(In the next chapter, Jan confronts ESP theory with a forlorn interpretation of love. She wants more money from Chuck, and still doesn't love Henri.)

## INFERIORITY COMPLEX

by Elliot Cantsin

Napoleon was only five foot two.  
Adolph Hitler had only one big ball.  
And George Bush had a very low IQ.  
Compensation cometh before a fall.

# POETRY...dance in words

by Sigmund Weiss

Poetry is a dance in words that test theories of philosophies against realities. Poetry is also a means of utilization, like a spade, a hoe, a rake, from which a garden is designed, made.

It is thus a poet utilizes sounds, meanings with words that perform motion as well as emotive thinking. Philosophy as prose is theory, but in poetry philosophy performs through objects in complex ways and, by such actions, undergoes testing.

The job of the poet is to search into thought, actions, responses of persons and to relate objects to their meanings, and to our comprehension of life through form.

Actually, in many ways, fiction is an extension of the poem into the prosaic form so that a writer may develop a subject through the mobility of words. Flippancy in treatment of a character or subject is only a notation of surface characteristics and tends to over-generalization. There is nothing wrong in detailing what is obvious in individuals and groups, but performing such in a trivial sense places the characters, the objects, the subjects into a trivial category. Comment writing about others is usually self-flattering that results mainly in jokes, puns, proving the poets, the authors, immature.

from notes of 3/16/90, revised 2/9/90

## RELIGION OF SCIENCE

by Charles Ramp

today's holy places—  
temples of health, shrines of research  
where priestlings of all genders  
move quietly,  
speaking soft words, precise,  
private in sacred conversations.  
white-coated emissaries  
are sent to announce oracles  
and sometimes to interpret sparingly,  
their eyes full of far, deep knowledges  
and soft compassions.  
these flamens stake no martyrs,  
for heretics are warned on  
other, hospitable gratings  
until the burning time  
when firestorms will destroy  
those not needed by sheltered  
leaders  
—for father entropy  
runs a tight ark  
godship.

OFT DREAMT ABOUT  
by Mary Ann Henn  
Slew pumps chug  
white owls fly nightly.  
Bullfrogs chug  
fireflies fly nightly.  
I chug  
fly nightly.

## ME TOO, HAIKU

by Richard M. Millard  
Flaming red sunset  
With a hush about the sky  
Your line printed here

Maturity is the Poncho...

MATURITY IS THE PONCHO...

(in the style of Edna St. Vincent Millay's

CHILDHOOD IS THE KINGDOM WHERE NOBODY DIES)

Maturity is not a day when the weather shines

or when the weather's poor...

The adult is bored, the weather's a fickle friend;

Maturity is the poncho that nobody wears.

Not when it's raining, that is.

- Michael Polo

## LOUIS ARMSTRONG!!

Featured tonight at Kid Ory's Bar  
and Oyster Pavilion, New Orleans.  
Mr. Armstrong will play *Cornet*  
*Chop Suey* and *Struttin' With*  
*Some Barbecue*.

Buy a bucket of oysters - and get  
a free **HOT FIVE** record or tape!

MOTHER OF GOD! IS THIS THE END  
OF BAMGOR ZACK? by Bamgor Zack  
I wrote a short poem tonight:  
The crippled roach I crushed!  
The dying spider I crushed!  
Now, my left bicep throbs.  
God: I refuse to be rushed!

# ME!

by Eric Rhodes

I can't believe myself. I'm falling in love with a girl who's at least three years younger than me, and I'm enjoying it. I don't know if she knows that I'm in love with her, but I sure do and that's all that counts. Oh yeah, and as long as she knows that she's in love with me. Why wouldn't she know that? After all, if I were her I'd know that I was in love with me. It's what's expected of you when you're younger by at least three years. Anyway, now that I have it straight that I'm in love with her, and that by all means she's in love with me, why don't I tell you about us?

First of all there's me. I look like I should be on the cover of every fashion magazine in the world. I have blond hair and scrumpous blue eyes. My skin is like flawless silk, or maybe should be compared with fine china. I succeed in everything I do and I have never failed at anything. In other words, let's just face it, I'm great! Well, almost. I don't want to be modest, but I don't look very good in pink. I guess they could've chosen a better color.

A little about her. She looks good, but only all right compared to me. She has this mole on the back of her neck which she should have taken care of better. Her eyes are wonderful, almost mystic, except for the bags under them. She's kinda stocky, and doesn't have much of a figure. She has long blonde hair, almost like mine, but not as well taken care of. As a matter of fact, she isn't even pretty next to me, which just goes to show that love is more than skin deep.

I'm waiting for her now. She always walks by this way after school, and I figured today I'd give her a chance to say "Hi." I know she'll be overjoyed. After all, it's not everybody I give a chance to say "Hi" to me. I think she's coming now.

There she is; she's turning the corner--Wait a minute, who's that with her? He's got his arm around her. He looks like he's straight out of Pimple Magazine, and his arms look like frog legs. If it were just his face, I'd think he was a sausage pizza. They're just walking by me. I've never been so insulted in my life. Like I said, I guess that love is more than skin deep.

Wait a minute; look at that girl standing over at the corner. Why, she's beautiful. Would you look at that golden, well-taken-care-of hair, and that wonderful makeup job on her eyes. Her skin looks as soft as mine, and she doesn't have any moles on her neck either. She looks twice as good as that other girl, and older too. I bet she has good taste. I bet she knows what's good when she looks at it. I could fall in love with her. I think I'm already in love with her. She's looking at me. I bet she's already in love with me. Why wouldn't she be? She knows beauty when it hits her in the face. You won't see her walking around with some pimple-faced kid. I think I'll go over there and give her a treat. I'll just stand there until she gets the courage to talk to me. I know she won't be able to resist my charm and beauty. She'll be overjoyed at the chance to say "Hi" to me.

## PERSONNEL CREATIVITY

by Charles Ramp

climate for creative thought, that's your wish? of course you'll find it here—encouraged, praised! stimulating—wide open for your active mind within the limits of our interests. independence? a proud fool's luxury. wide parameters set tasks in focus. our one concern is always "how?" not "why?" you never have to think about the use of what we make,

for others, wise, decide. that's marketing and maybe politics. not our department.

now,  
when can you start?



SAME THING, DAY AFTER DAY,  
HAUL A PEBBLE HERE, DRAG  
A BREAD CRUMB THERE...

The-Reduction  
Camera-Ready  
Copy - 5 1/2" on  
a typewriter  
set on elite  
pitch - For  
Computers, use  
10pt. element  
and measure  
width as above  
(no reductions)

# ONE IN FIVE

by Amber Rollins

I knew it.

I knew it all along.

What's wrong with the world.

One in five people here are aliens.

Charlie tried to tell me that those news guys that said that meant the illegal Meskins from across the border, but I know better. Charlie always was a pure-D fool.

Real aliens. Like "War of the Worlds," you know.

I'm sure you do.

This explains a lot.

And I used to think it was the negras.

Look at the TV sometime, one of those crowd shots like at the Super Bowl. There they are, waving their arms around, trying to get attention, mouthing "Hi Mom" at the camera.

Aliens. Trying to hypnotize America at large with them arm motions. But I'm harder to get to, being a sophisticated adult and all.

You know what I mean.

One in five.

Count 'em.

Watch one of those groups of teenagers at the mall, with their big hair and tight clothes, all full of indecent sex and loud, unearthly noises. I followed some yesterday, just to make sure. Followed them out to the parking lot, out to their car. I got up right close to the greasy windows to look straight into those alien eyes.

They were pointing at me. Laughing. Screaming.

They knew I was on to them.

I was prepared. For an attack. They tried to infiltrate my pure Earthling eardrums with their soundwaves.

And you know there's only one way to kill those kind of creatures.

I pulled out the gas can I had brought for just such an occasion.

They burned quite well.

One in five. Keep that in mind. Without vigilance you and me could be one, too.

Know what I think?

I think there must be a lot of them downtown. Those people that wander around muttering to themselves, acting like they're homeless and put upon. They just want me to stop and help them out of the Christian kindness of my heart so that they can lure me in with alienspeak.

They don't know that I am ready.

And there's no stopping me.

Now that I think of it, those little kids in the playground look suspicious to me, too.

And--

And...

## OVERHEARD at America's Lunch Counters



"What's the smallest thing in the world and you can see it in the dark? —Lightning bug! They've got a dynamo in their rear ends!"

# TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1989

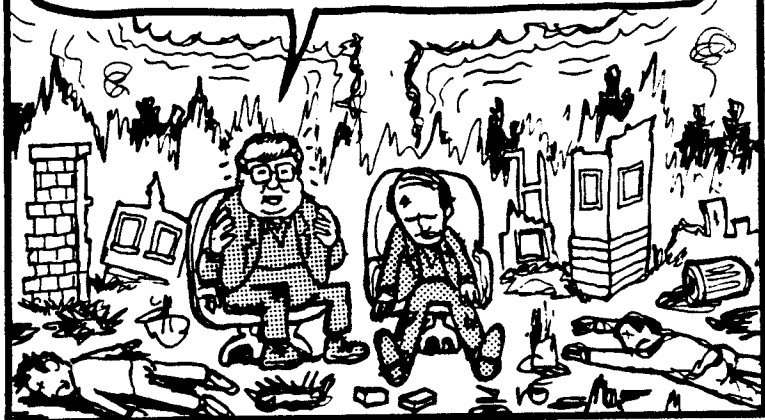
WELCOME TO ANOTHER EDITION OF  
"SISKULL & EGGBERT AT THE  
NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST" !!

I'M ROGER EGGBERT.

AND I'M GENE  
SISKULL.....  
mumble...guh...



WHILE SOME CRITICS HAVE PANNED THE  
APOCALYPSE AS PREDICTABLE AND ANTI-CLIMACTIC,  
I PERSONALLY FOUND GLOBAL ANNIHILATION  
AND WORLD-WIDE DESTRUCTION TO BE A  
SOMEWHAT COMPELLING AND RIVETING EXPERIENCE !!



FURTHERMORE... THE STUNNINGLY VISUAL  
NUCLEAR SPECIAL EFFECTS MORE THAN  
COMPENSATED FOR THE OVERLY-EMOTIVE AND  
CLICHED SHRIEKS AND MOANS OF MILLIONS  
OF PEOPLE GETTING BLOWN TO BITS !!



I'M AFRAID I DISAGREE, ROGER....  
REALLY.... THE WHOLE IDEA OF MASS  
EXTERMINATION HAS JUST BEEN DONE TO  
DEATH (NO PUN INTENDED).... DIDN'T YOU  
FIND ALL THAT "END OF THE WORLD" BUSINESS  
JUST A TAD OVER-STATED ???!!



GRANTED, GENE, THE ANNIHILATION  
OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE IS  
PERHAPS LACKING IN SUBTLE  
NUANCES, BUT...uh... BUT...uh...

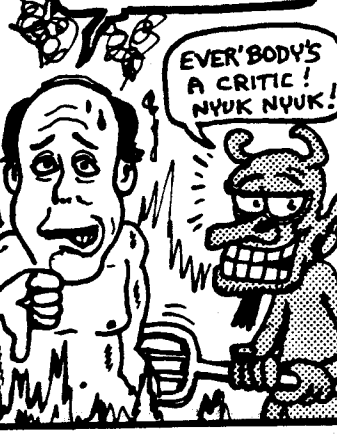


KABLOOIE!

... AND WHILE I FOUND  
HEAVEN TO HAVE A CERTAIN  
SACCHARINE QUALITY, OVER-  
ALL I GIVE IT A BIG  
THUMBS UP !!



WHILE I FOUND  
ETERNAL DAMNATION  
TO BE SOMEWHAT  
AESTHETICALLY  
UNAPPEALLING !!  
THUMB'S DOWN !!



EVER'BODY'S  
A CRITIC!  
NYUK NYUK!

# SAYZ-U (Letters)

Dear Elayne,

2-9-90

If Bangor Zack with his hob-nailed boots and his sixth-grade education can feel cozy writing for *INSIDE JOKE*, anybody can.

In this world, you got to be tough as an Arkansan hog. I pack a knife, a straight razor, and a Greener shotgun.

In this world, everyone has conflicting opinions. I go into a barroom and express the opinion, "Perhaps God is a spider," and the same thing always happens--a barroom brawl.

Somebody yells, "God ain't no spider!" and I try various ways to convince him.

This feller, David Castleman, wrote a powerful fine poem for *IJ* #73--something to keep. I'd like to rescue that poem from the gigantic poetry slag-heap. Mr. Castleman thinks human lives are more important than spider lives. That's wrong. I say, "Perhaps God is a spider!"

The knife and the straight razor are no problem--but it's awkward as hell riding on the Huntington bus with a Greener shotgun across my knees!

BANGOR ZACK BULLEN  
Box 426  
Northport, NY 11768

Dear Elayne,

*Is the US Right or Wrong on Panama?* That's the question they're asking in the mainstream press. Noriega was a US puppet. The US sent in 25 thousand men to get him, defying the Constitution, breaking international law, going against the Geneva Convention (*which US assholes never bothered to sign, by the way--ed.*) and our agreements with the OAS, killing God knows how many hundred civilians (a war crime this country commits constantly with cynical impunity), and doing billions of dollars worth of damage in the process, and yet, compared with the situation that had existed in Panama previously, this looked like an example of America's good works. The question is not whether the US is right or wrong on Panama, but whether a country with the US's power could have a more evil foreign policy than it does. And if you ask Bob Dole he'll tell you: "We're working on it."

Sincerely,

ELLIOT CANTSIN  
1961 Cedar Street  
North Merrick, NY 11566

*All of which is why it's so terribly important to be in contact with non-mainstream media. I subscribe to a number of very good publications myself, if anyone's interested in addresses.*

Hi y'all,

February 13, 1990

Thanks for #73. Coincidentally, Susan Packie's not-adult-till-21 piece echoes one of mine that I call "Sociology Finally Comes Up With Some Honest-To-Goodness Resolutions Of Some Of The Peskier Social Annoyances That Plague Us So Ungraciously," one of which is that nobody be certified as a Human Being till their 25th birthday. Maybe I can send it after I take the next year off to rest and let you catch up.

Hope all's going well at your new residence. Sounds like a good place to be. And wish I could attend the housewarming, but, well, give me a rain-check if you will and maybe some other time, if/when me and the wife ever make it back to The City again. Okay? 'Preciate the invite, though.

Take care there,

WAYNE HOGAN  
P.O. Box 842  
Cookeville, TN 38503

Dear Elayne,

February 22, 1990

Being a big Jeff Goldblum fan, I simply must say Dorian's dip hit home. And the Serge-guy's stuff was pretty nifty too. Last night's phone conversation (*with me--ed.*) has pretty much left me confused. What did I mean by saying that I "loved Anni's stuff as usual?" Did I actually want to say I missed Anni in the last ish but wrote the former sentence out of habit? Or was I thinking of someone else's stuff and just wrote "Anni" out of habit? Do vampires dream, and if so, what do they dream about? Only the Shadow knows...

Anyway, Anni, heard you were opening up your own bookstore. Congratulations! Will you be carrying Edward Gorey books? How about the book *The Stupids Die*? I'm sorry that the opening coincides with Elayne's party--sometimes I think that despite our efforts we'll never actually meet face-to-face, but anyway best of luck to you from me and the rabbit.

Susa, "When, Oh When" really struck a chord with me as I have some friends who are just about to spawn. There were some wonderful points in there. Especially the monster thing.

Ken, did you write about the dump just for me? You sweetheart, I looove the dump. It's such a great place. When I was in high school a boy took me to the landfill. It was probably the most romantic date I ever had during that period of my life.

Of course the usual kudos to Gary, Daza and Ace--no, I'm not just saying this because I may see you at Elayne's party and I'd feel like a real shit if I don't include something nice about you. I'm complimenting you on being consistently edible. "Edible" meaning you never cause me to want to regurgitate.

R.R. Hilliard, are you related to the Mr. Hilliard on the Addams Family?

J.P.--You never call. You never write. Don't you love me anymore?

Phil--Ditto.

Okay, okay, getting too silly here.

Elayne, I will definitely be coming to your party this year. The train tickets are already bought. Please tell Dorian, Vinnie and Tom not to worry--that I'm an easy houseguest and I won't throw paint on the floors if there is a cold six-pack of Tab to greet me! Only kidding. I always bring my own supply, but that you know.

Bunny's getting bored, so I better go entertain him before he gets us both into trouble. Looking forward to seeing you soon,

PRUDENCE GAELOR  
P.O. Box 177  
Laurel, MD 20725

Dear Elayne,

27 February 1990

Just a Brief Note to let you know that I am still alive and well and going ever so slowly off my rocker here in Reading, where I have recently been doing daily battle with the phone company, the electric company, the gas company, five separate book distributors, two tape distributors, a carpenter named Gary who seems to have some slight difficulty telling the difference between white pine and fiberboard, the landlord, the trash collector and the Reading Historical Committee, a group of people dedicated to preserving the quaint, colonial charm that Reading once had almost none of, having been incorporated sometime in the late 1770's as a way-station on the coal delivery line. Or had you already surmised all this? I'll tell you, Elayne--the next time I think I've come up with an astonishingly brilliant idea (for instance, the opening of a children's bookshop), probably the nicest thing that anyone could do for me is to shoot me cleanly through the head and have it over with all at once. I mean, really.

But that's neither here nor there and, since this isn't meant to be a Real Letter, I'm really just passing the time of day here. I ought to say, however, that I think Sergio Taubmann's "Transitory" is easily the best serial I've seen in *IJ*, probably since the introduction of the form; that S. Prescott Wilson's "Trouble in the Toychest" was truly excellent; and that I haven't understood a word that's come out of Elliot Cantsin's typewriter since he started issuing forth with them. I don't know, it's probably just all the Cats in the Hat I've been mucking around with since the initial collapse of my brain.

Maybe when all this is over, and I'm genteely starving to death, at home amongst my books--did you know there's a children's book out called *You Can Never Go Down the Drain*? It was a tremendous relief to me, I promise you--I'll have time to write you an honest-to-goodness letter. It's been far too long, hasn't it? In the meantime, however, just sign me

ANNI ACKNER  
Enemy of Our American Heritage  
P.O. Box 18  
Reading, PA 19603

*Note to folks who've sent me lots of backlog (especially art): Please stop! We only have six more issues to go--after that, all unused art and writing will be returned! Thanks!*

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